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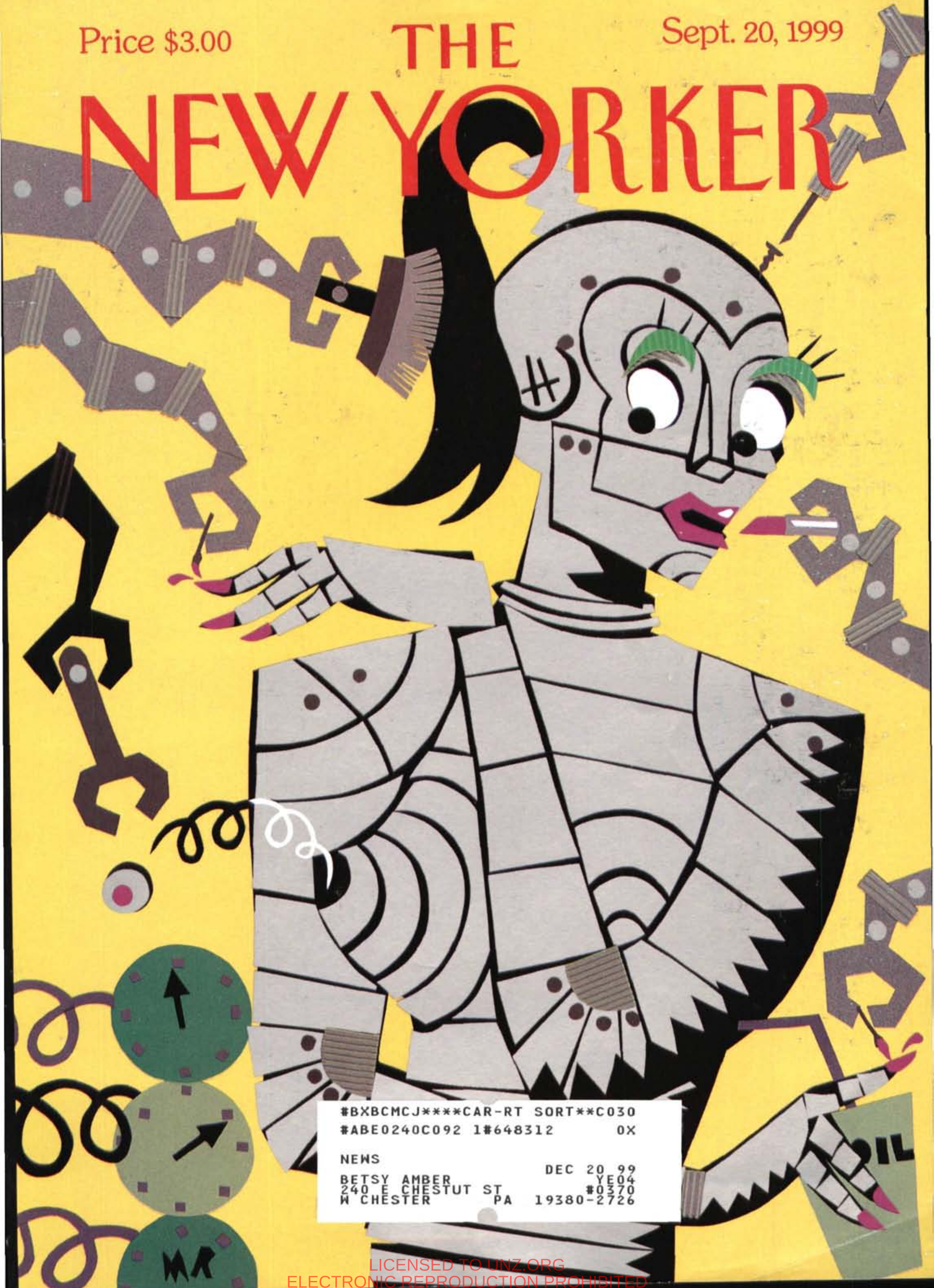

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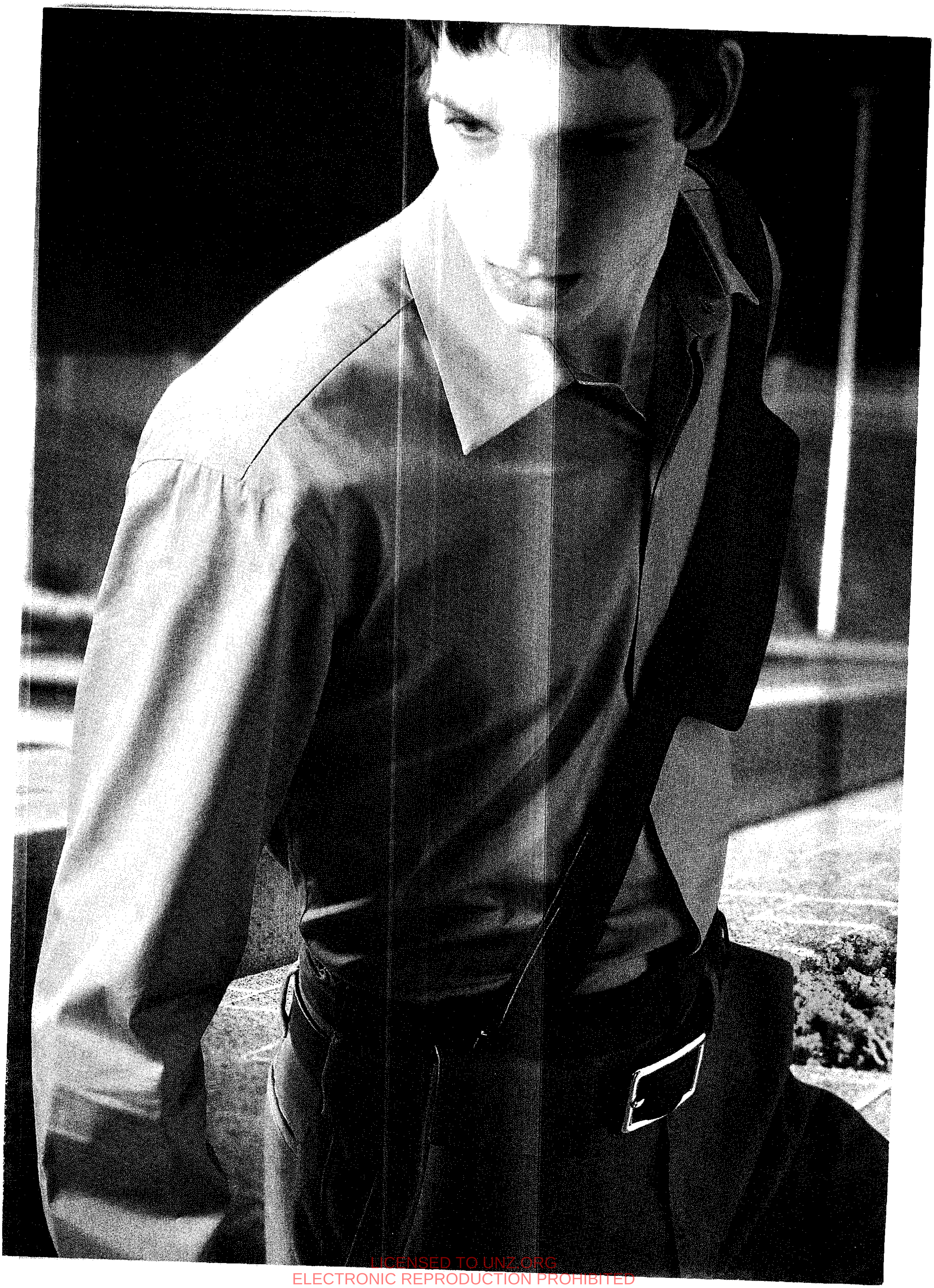

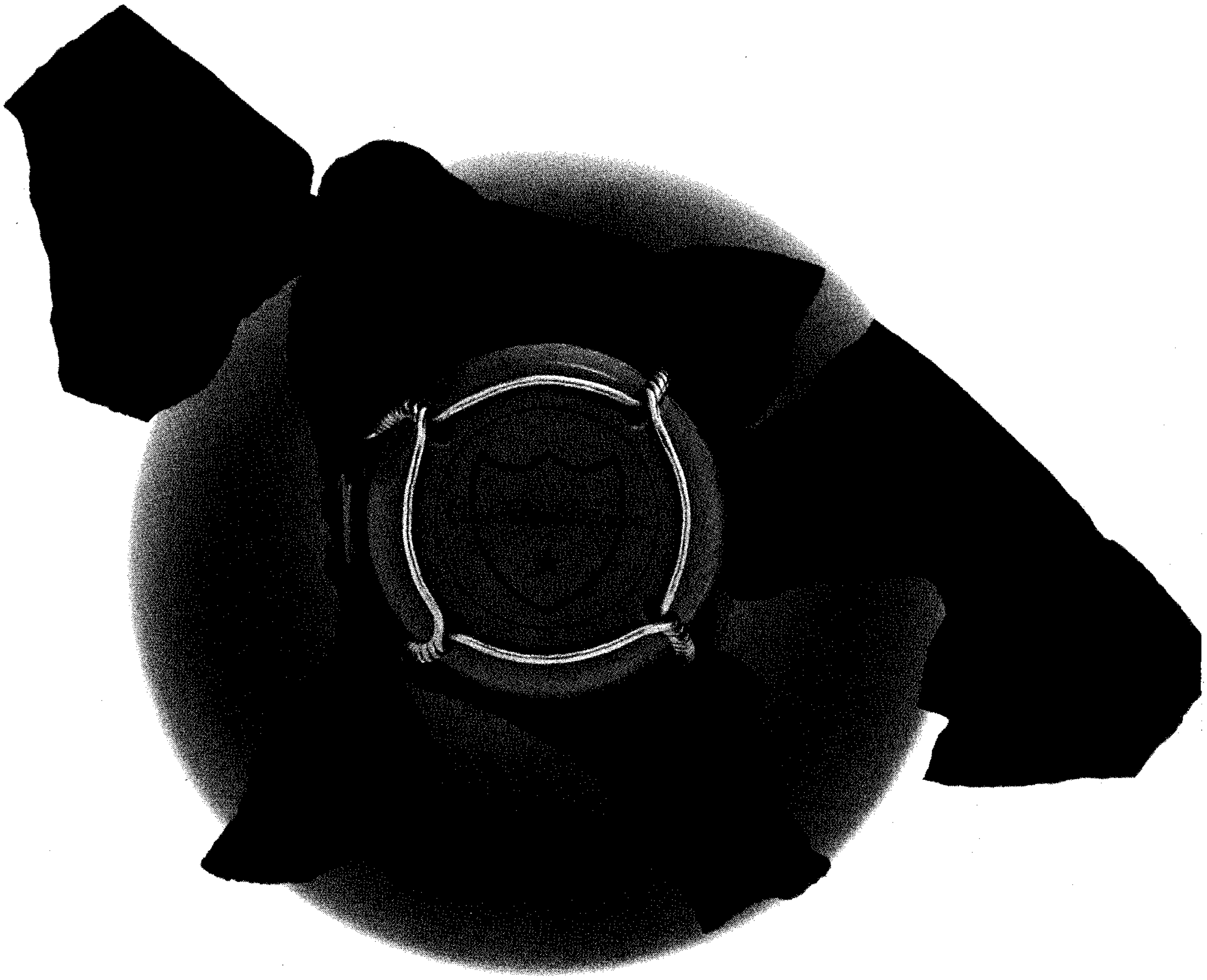

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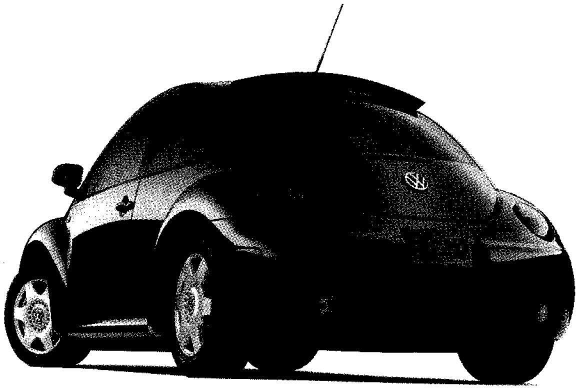

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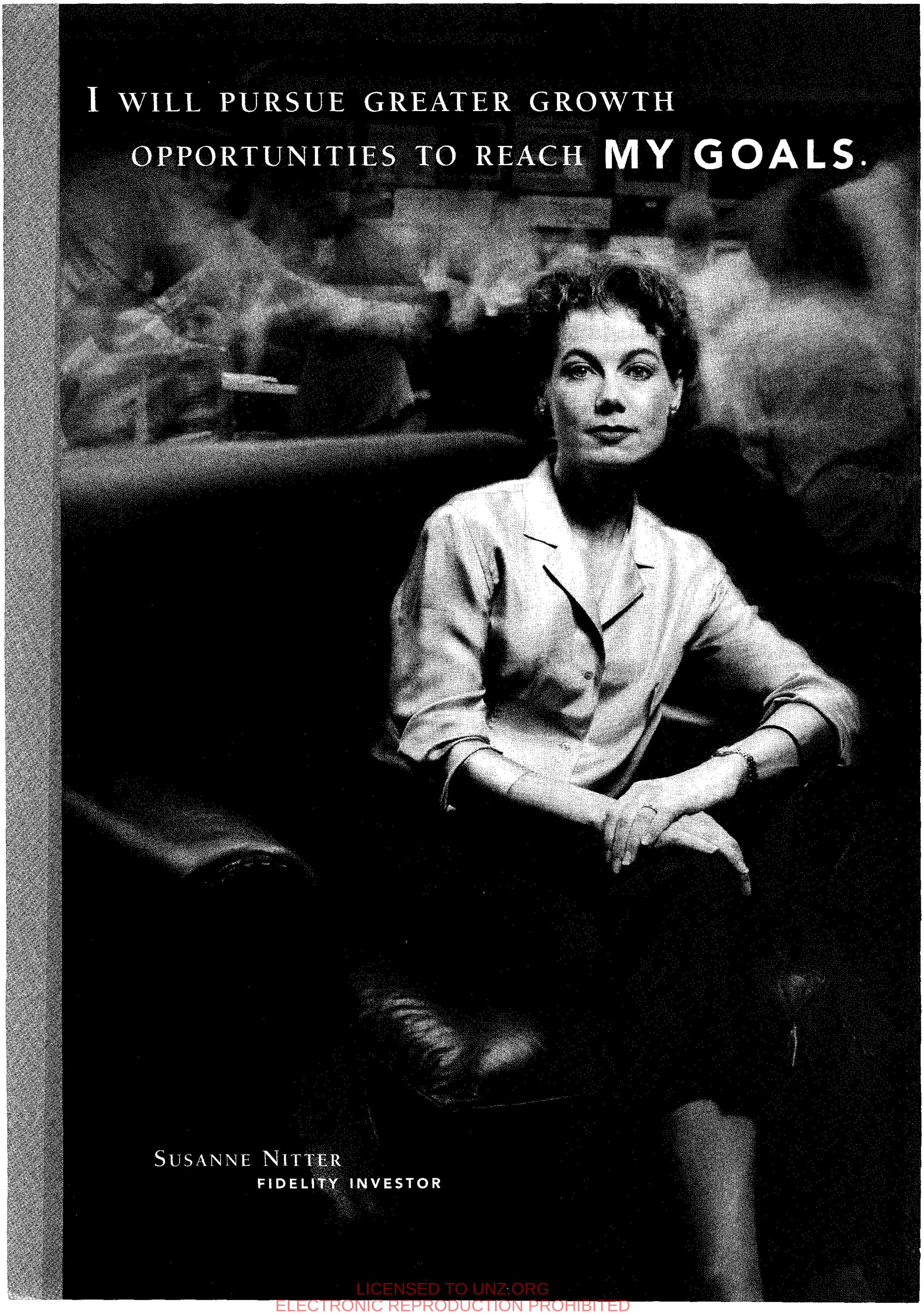
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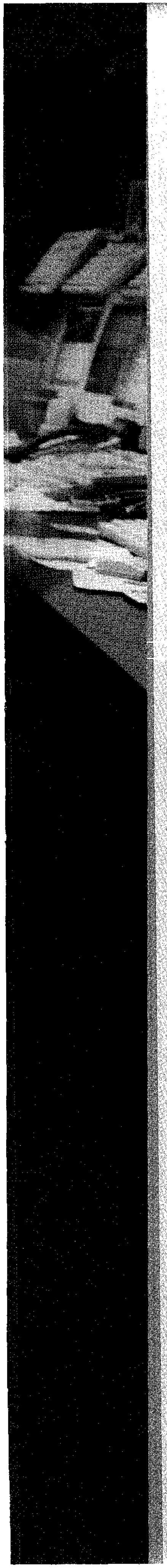

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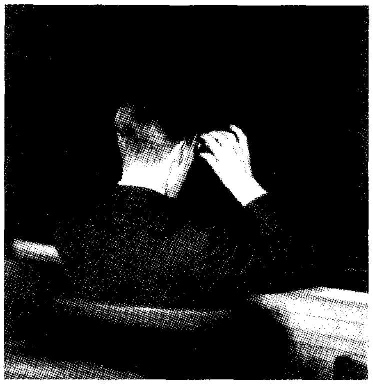

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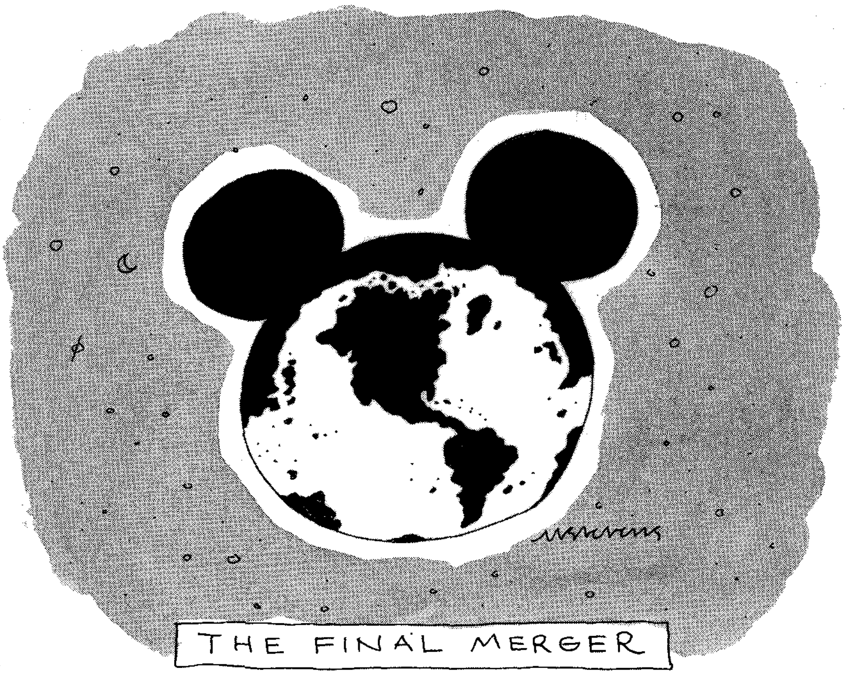

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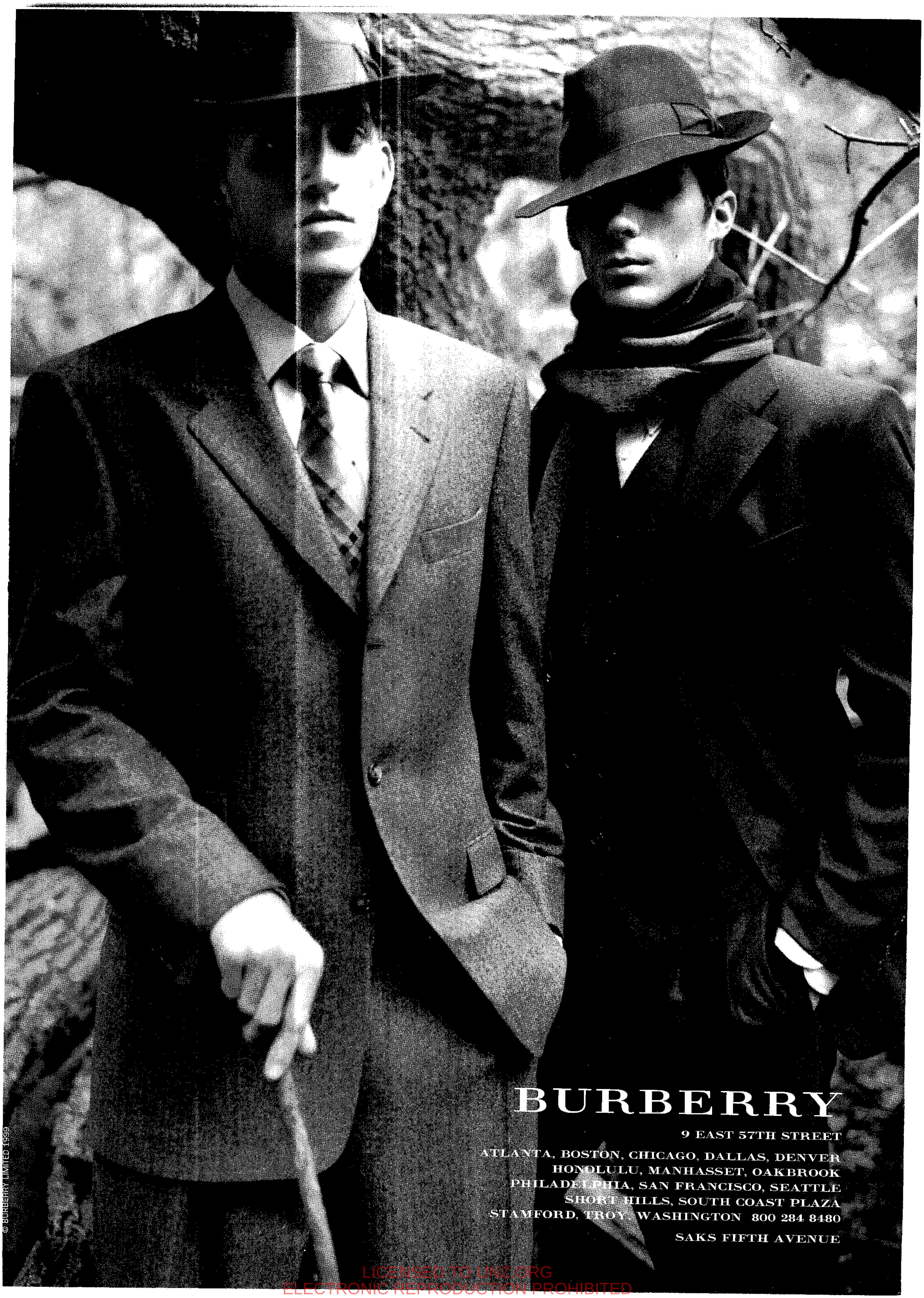

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THE MAIL

HOW NOT TO LEAD

In his review of the reissued version of Roland Huntford's book "The Last Place on Earth," about Roald Amundsen and Robert Scott's race to the South Pole (Books, August 23rd & 30th), John Banville might have mentioned another aspect of the two expeditions—an aspect that later contributed to a global tragedy. Although Amundsen was indisputably captain of his ship, the Fram, and of the Norwegian party, he followed Nordic tradition by procuring the assent of his men before taking them into harm's way. He and his comrades lived in an egalitarian community. Scott, on the other hand, was a Royal Navy man. He brooked no opposition to his often foolish commands and provided no opportunity for useful input from the lower ranks. The same unquestioning obedience to authority and willingness to die at the behest of incompetents which Scott required was to prove disastrous for the British troops in the trenches of the First World War—who had had Scott's odious example foisted on them.

PATRICIA HYLAND
Briarcliff Manor, N.Y.

THE URBAN JUNGLE

Reading Bill Buford's account of the night he spent camping out in Central Park ("Lions and Tigers and Bears," August 23rd & 30th) brought to my mind the summer twenty years ago when two research assistants and I set out to document the nighttime use of central city parks as part of a larger project, on open space. Although the parks we studied—Boston's Public Garden and Hartford's Bushnell Park—are much smaller than Central Park, we approached our observations with the same sense of trepidation that Buford describes. But what we discovered was that the parks were seldom empty, even in the middle of the night, in the pouring rain. Until 1 A.M., the dominant park users were couples or small groups of adults strolling or talking quietly; after that time, the dominant users were single men, usually sitting alone on benches. We were never bothered by anyone, and, by the end of summer, night had become our favorite time to be in the parks. We were particularly struck by the number of people, especially in Boston, who were in the park contemplating the city by night, just as Buford was. This suggests that Central Park's designer, Frederick Law Olmsted, got it right: what matters is the contrast between city and park. Though our public spaces have begun to revive recently, their sad deterioration over the past thirty years has diminished our ability to appreciate what should be our crowning achievement: the city itself.

THOMAS A. MORE
South Burlington, Vt.

NETWORK BABBITTRY

I thoroughly enjoyed—and was greatly saddened by—Tad Friend's piece on David Lynch and his difficulties with ABC ("Creative Differences," September 6th). Network television continually lowers itself to such a level that, I would guess, the Weather Channel will soon be offering more innovative fare. I do have to take exception, though, to the actor Justin Theroux's comment that shows like Lynch's are doomed to fail because of the taste of test audiences in "Middle America." In fact, dull, unimaginative people reside throughout the country. It is thanks to the cowardly choices made by network executives like those at ABC that what could be an interesting medium is nothing more than visual opium. All Americans, even the "middle," deserve better.

DOUG YEAGER
Milwaukee, Wis.

•

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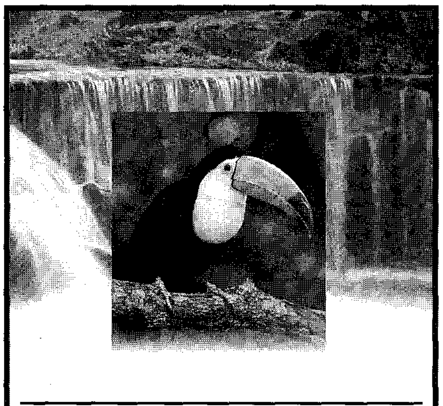

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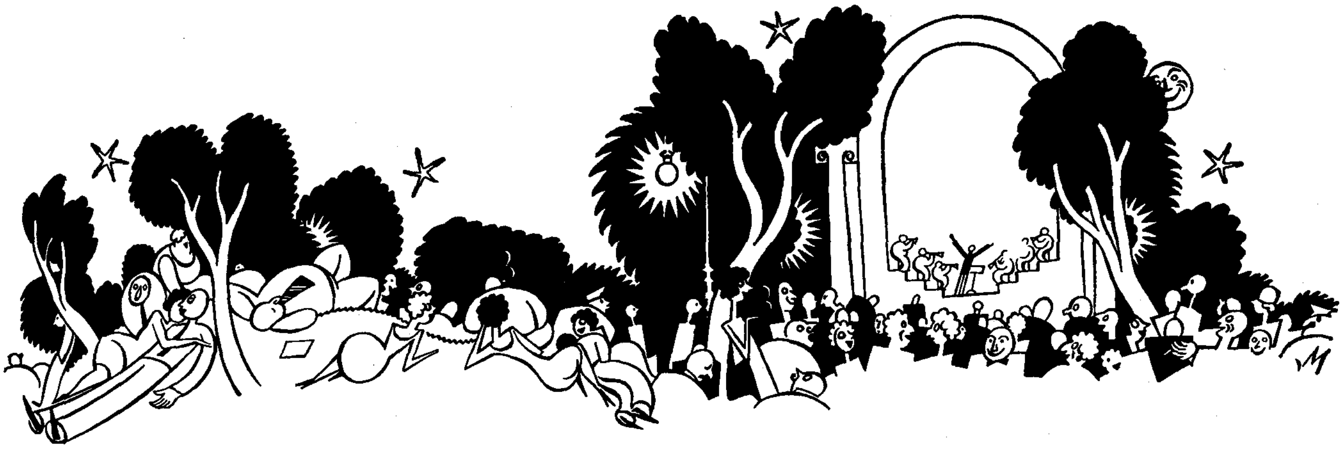

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Avenue A—The 29th Street Rep's production of David Steen's drama about the effects of urban decay. Opens Sept. 16 at 8. (212 W. 29th St. 465-0575.)

The Beauty Part—S. J. Perelman's 1962 comedy, set in nineteen-fifties New York and Hollywood, about the aristocrat Lance Weatherwax and his pursuit of a bohemian girl. In previews Sept. 16-17. Opens Sept. 18 at 8. (Bank Street Theatre, 155 Bank St. 591-0564.)

Big Blonde—Dorothy Parker's short story, adapted for the stage by Peter Mattaliano, who also directs, and starring Jennifer Spahr. Previews begin Sept. 16. (113 Gallery, 113 Ludlow St. 253-1813.)

Contact—A dance-play about romantic dreams, set to the music of Stéphane Grappelli, Puccini, Benny Goodman, the Beach Boys, and the Squirrel Nut Zippers, among other musicians and composers. Co-conceived by Susan Stroman (choreography and direction) and John Weidman (book). In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

The Country Club—From the Drama Dept., a new comedy by Douglas Carter Beane, about a group of burned-out Wasps in their thirties, who gather during eleven holidays over the course of a year. In previews. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 541-8441.)

Dame Edna: The Royal Tour—Calling all possums: the singer, swami, grief counselor, and children's-book illustrator makes her Broadway début. Previews begin Sept. 15. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

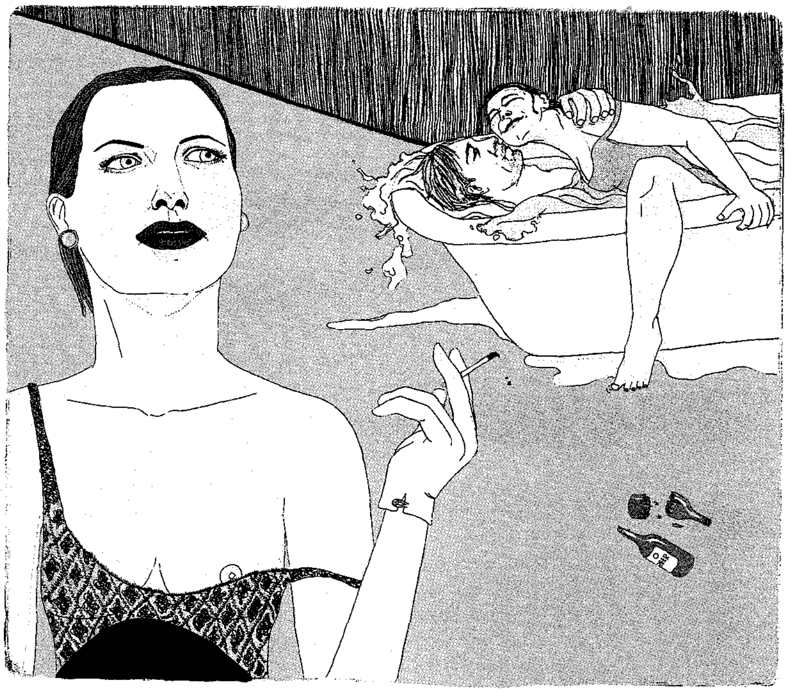
Epic Proportions—Kristin Chenoweth heads the cast of a new comedy by Larry Coen and David Crane, set in the thirties in the Arizona desert, during the filming of a Hollywood Biblical epic. Jerry Zaks is the director. In previews. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Fully Committed—New York's most fashionable restaurant is the setting for Becky Mode's comedy, in which an unemployed actor turned reservations clerk must cope with the crowd vying for a table. Nicholas Martin is the director. In previews. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3366.)

Give Me Your Answer, Do!—Brian Friel's latest play, which centers on the rivalry between two writers. The cast includes Kate Burton, Helen Carey, Michael Emerson, John Glover, Gawn Grainger, Joel Grey, and Lois Smith. In previews. Presented by the Roundabout. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

The Right Size—The British comedy duo of Sean Foley and Hamish McColl bring their West End hit, "Do You Come Here Often?," to P.S. 122. In previews. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

Signature Theatre Company—The Maria Irene Fornes season begins with two one-acts, "Mud" and "Drowning," directed by David Esbjornson. In previews. (555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)



Elizabeth Marvel, Bruce McKenzie, and Jenny Bacon, in "A Streetcar Named Desire," at New York Theatre Workshop.

TARA TOMLIN

The Vagina Monologues—Eve Ensler, in her one-woman disquisition. Previews begin Sept. 21. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

The Winds of God—Two contemporary Tokyo comedians killed in a motorcycle wreck are reincarnated as Second World War kamikaze pilots, in a comedy by Masayuki Imai, who co-stars. Preview on Sept. 15. Opens Sept. 16 at 7. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Caught in the Act—The Threshold Theatre Company's festival of international one-acts, by playwrights both well known (Dario Fo, Ferenc Molnar, Schnitzler) and obscure, continues through Oct. 3. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., at Spring St. 647-0202.)

The Countess—Gregory Murphy's play, which tells the story of how the nineteenth-century art critic John Ruskin's wife left him for the painter John Everett Millais, is a vivid exploration of the self-indulgent pleasures of small-mindedness (in this case, Ruskin's and his parents'). The script is funny and intelligent, if a bit overlong, and the cast does a wonderful job of revealing the characters' complete inability to communicate with—or even understand—each other, personally or artistically. Jennifer Woodward is particularly strong as Mrs. Ruskin, in a portrayal of the depths of passion and despair it can take to break free. Directed by Ludovica Villar-Hauser, with luxurious period costumes by Christopher Lione. (Samuel Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 594-2826.)

Dear Liar—Marian Seldes and Donal Donnelly portray Mrs. Patrick Campbell and George Bernard Shaw, in a drama that Jerome Kilty based on letters written during the forty-year clandestine love affair between the actress and the playwright. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes Sept. 19.)

The Exact Center of the Universe—Joan Vail Thorne's comedy, in which a small-town Southerner (Reed Birney) is torn between his overbearing mother (Frances Sternhagen) and his sweetheart (Tracy Thorne), reopens at a new theatre following its staging last spring by Women's Projects and Productions. (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

The Gathering—A Shabbat dinner set during the spring of Reagan's controversial visit to Bitburg (the German cemetery where, it is believed, Nazi soldiers are buried) turns into political crossfire between a Dachau

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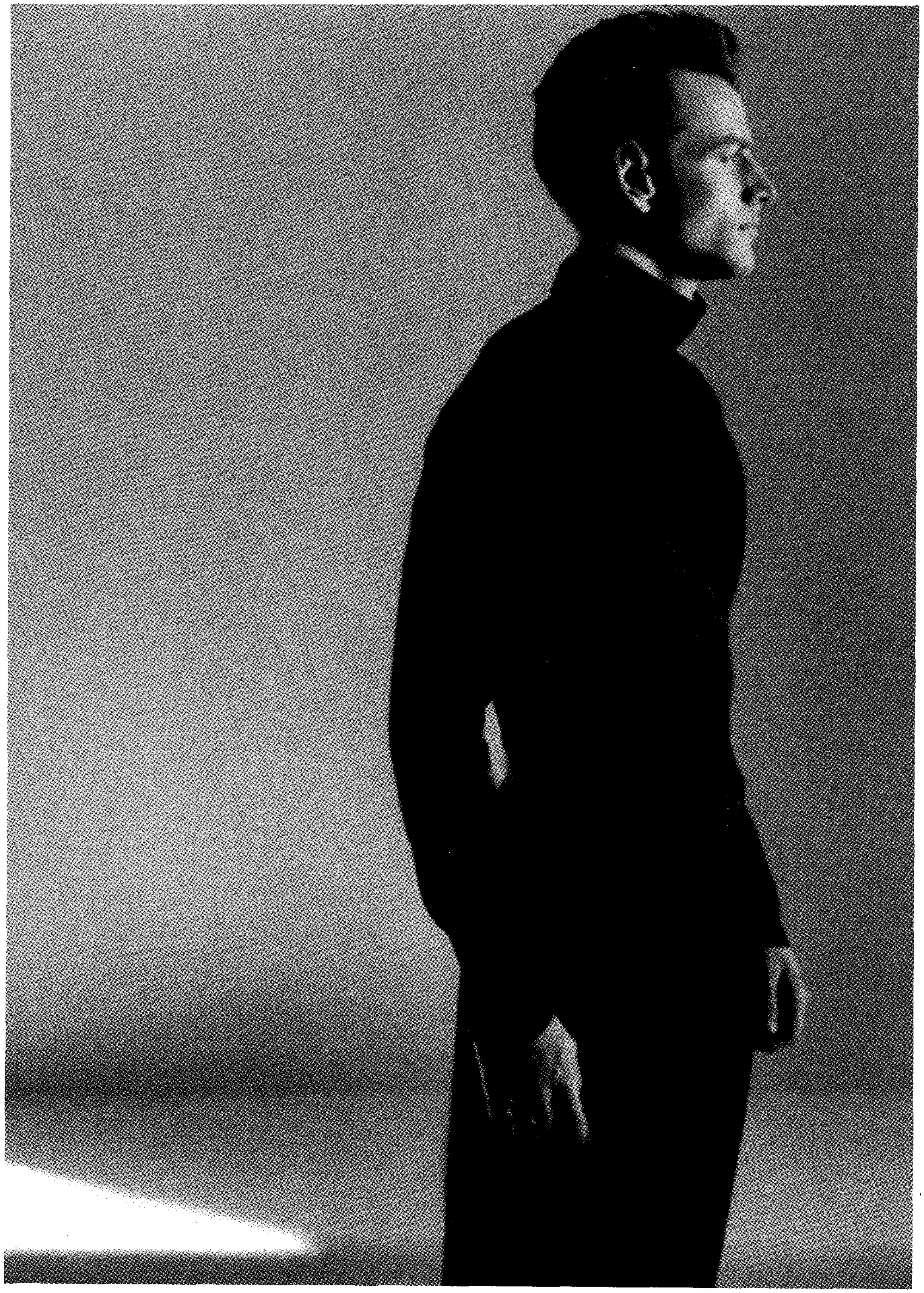


GIORGIO ARMANI
LE COLLEZIONI

survivor (Ben Hammer) and his son (Robert Fass), who is a speechwriter for the President. It could have been a sombre, if not overly burdened, affair, were it not for the comic tone of the tightly scripted first act. The mood slows to a more ponderous pace in the second. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 239-6200.)

It's My Party (and I'll Die If I Want To)—F. Murray Abraham stars in a family comedy by Elizabeth Coleman. (ArcLight, 152 W. 71st St. 307-4100. Closes Sept. 19.)

Kat and the Kings—A rock-and-roll musical by Taliep Petersen and David Kramer, set in Cape Town in 1957, about a doo-wop group trying to make it big. Mr. Kramer is the director. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Monster—The Toronto troupe da da kamera comes to P.S. 122 with Daniel MacIvor's one-man play, in which he portrays multiple characters in a series of intertwined horror tales. Sept. 16-19 at 7:30. Continues through Sept. 26. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

Psyche—An outdoor, multimedia play, adapted by Ralph Lee from Molière's "Psyché" and Heywood's "Love's Mistress." Sept. 17-19 at 7:30. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 929-4777.)

A Streetcar Named Desire—Elizabeth Marvel portrays Blanche DuBois, in Ivo van Hove's staging of Tennessee Williams's play. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

Summer '69—A revue tracing a group of music fans' trip to the original Woodstock festival. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Things You Shouldn't Say Past Midnight—Peter Ackerman's screwball bedroom comedy consists mainly of a sublimely ridiculous conference call involving three pairs of lovers. The questions about sex and the proper balance between intellectual and physical attraction have no answers, but Ackerman has some interesting suggestions, and, to his credit, comedy outweighs the theorizing. John Rando, the director, has a good eye, and the show comes off beautifully. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Thwak—Comic acrobatics (both physical and vocal) from the Australian performers David Collins and Shane Dundas, a.k.a. the Umbilical Brothers. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

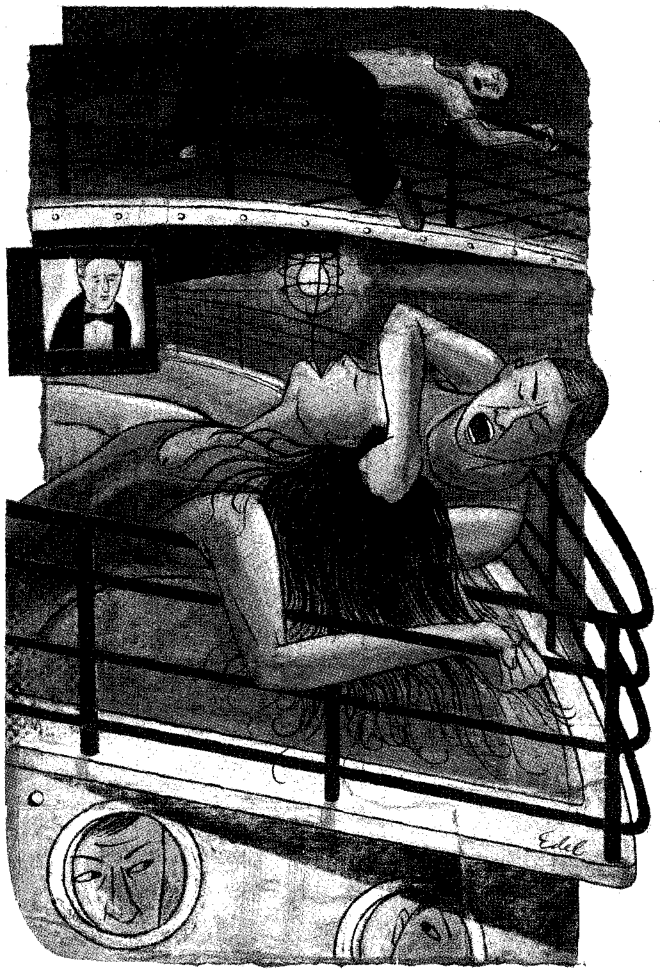
Voices in the Dark—In this age of computer-generated gore, the actress Judith Ivey, playwright John Pielmeier ("Agnes of God"), and director Christopher Ashley have achieved the impossible, a truly thrilling stage thriller. It's a classic plot: Ivey plays a radio-talk-show host who gets a call from a wacko, then heads off to an isolated cabin for a peaceful weekend—oops! Ivey and the writing are smart and funny, and the scares are both unanticipated and really scary; the plot includes some nice twists, and the supporting cast carry the whole thing off with style. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

The Weir—Conor McPherson's play takes place in the musty chill of a backwater Irish pub, where a handful of habitués chew the cud of their solitude, spinning ghostly yarns. It has a bittersweet charm, but for all the well-crafted talk and the well-observed bonhomie, it is finally a shaggy-bog story. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/12/99.) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Whoa-Jack!—David Greenspan and Queen Esther have joined the cast of the Worth Street Theatre's encore staging of a drama by Jeff Cohen, set on a Southern Army base during the civil-rights movement. (Davis Hall, City College, Convent Ave. at 134th St. 650-7148.)

LONG RUNS

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN: Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CABARET:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **DEATH OF A SALESMAN:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **DE LA GUARDA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FOOTLOOSE:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **FOSSE:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **IT AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT THE BLUES:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Ibis, 327 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **SIDE MAN:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **WIT:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.



"Odd Sea," aboard the Yankee, docked at Pier 25 (see Dance).

DANCE

"Vers la Flamme"—Martha Clarke presents a wordless dramatization of five Chekhov stories, set to thirty-two works by Scriabin. (New Victory Theatre, 209 W. 42nd St. 721-6500. Sept. 15-17 and Sept. 19 at 8 and Sept. 18 at 3 and 8.)

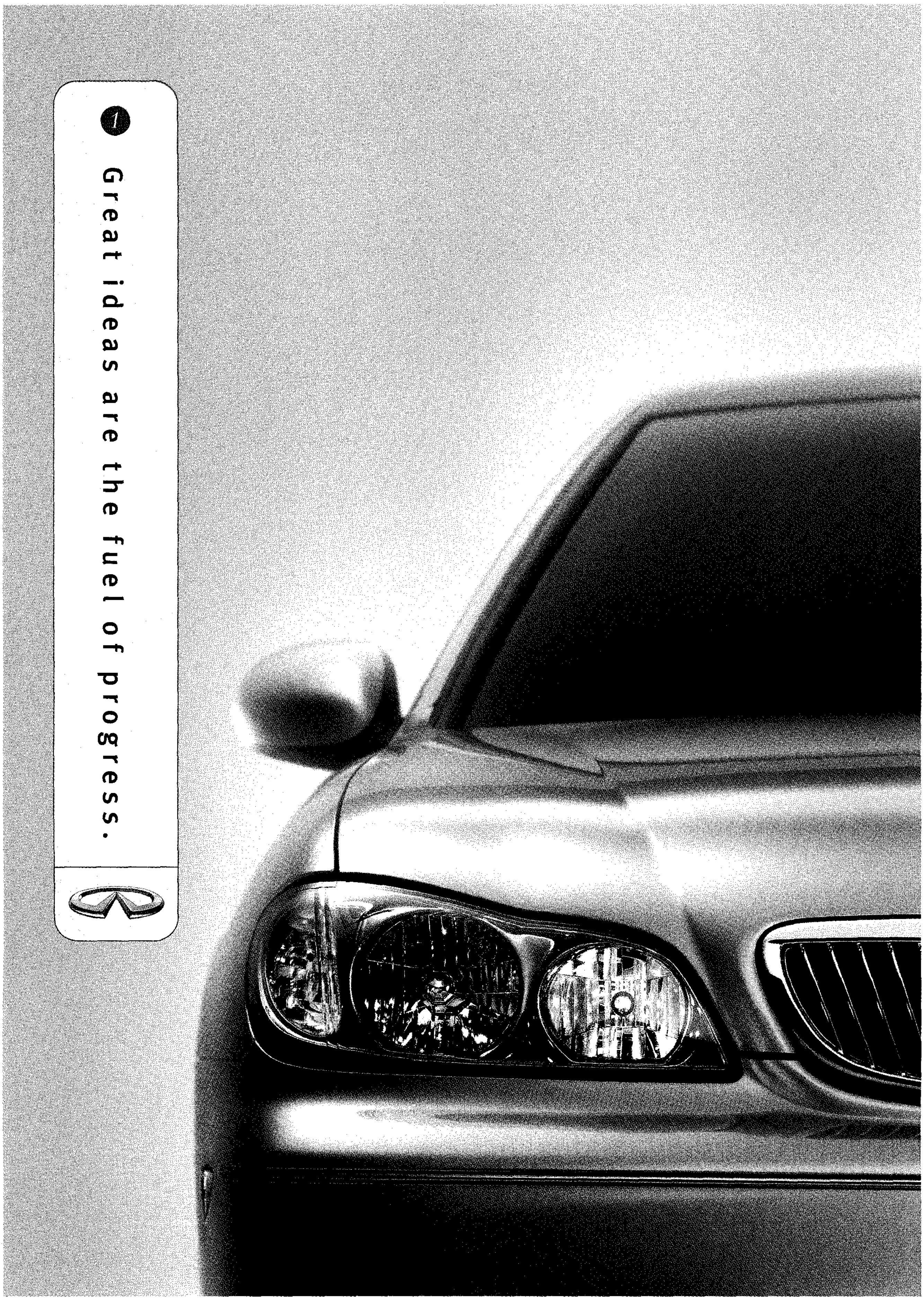
"Odd Sea"—Anyone attending the choreographer Clarinda Mac Low's retelling of the Odyssey—performed aboard the Yankee, a side-loading steamer built in 1907—will quite literally follow the wanderings of the Homeric hero. As the sun sets, the audience boards the ship for a prologue in the bow. In the main cabin, Penelope's suitors loll in various stages of dissolution. A few more steps aft, at the ship's bar, Telemachus (on an overhead video monitor) babbles about his father to veterans of the Trojan War. Further astern, the elusive Odysseus and Calypso dance. The nymph leads the audience up, across the third deck (where she and Hermes bicker under the stars) and back to the bow, revealing Penelope, alone on land, recounting a dream. When the audience reënters the main cabin (now Hades), the dead peer in through the portholes. And so on. It's an epic; wear comfortable shoes. (The Yankee, Pier 25, N. Moore St. at the Hudson River. 803-5437. Sept. 14-16 and Sept. 19-22 at sunset, approximately 7:30.)

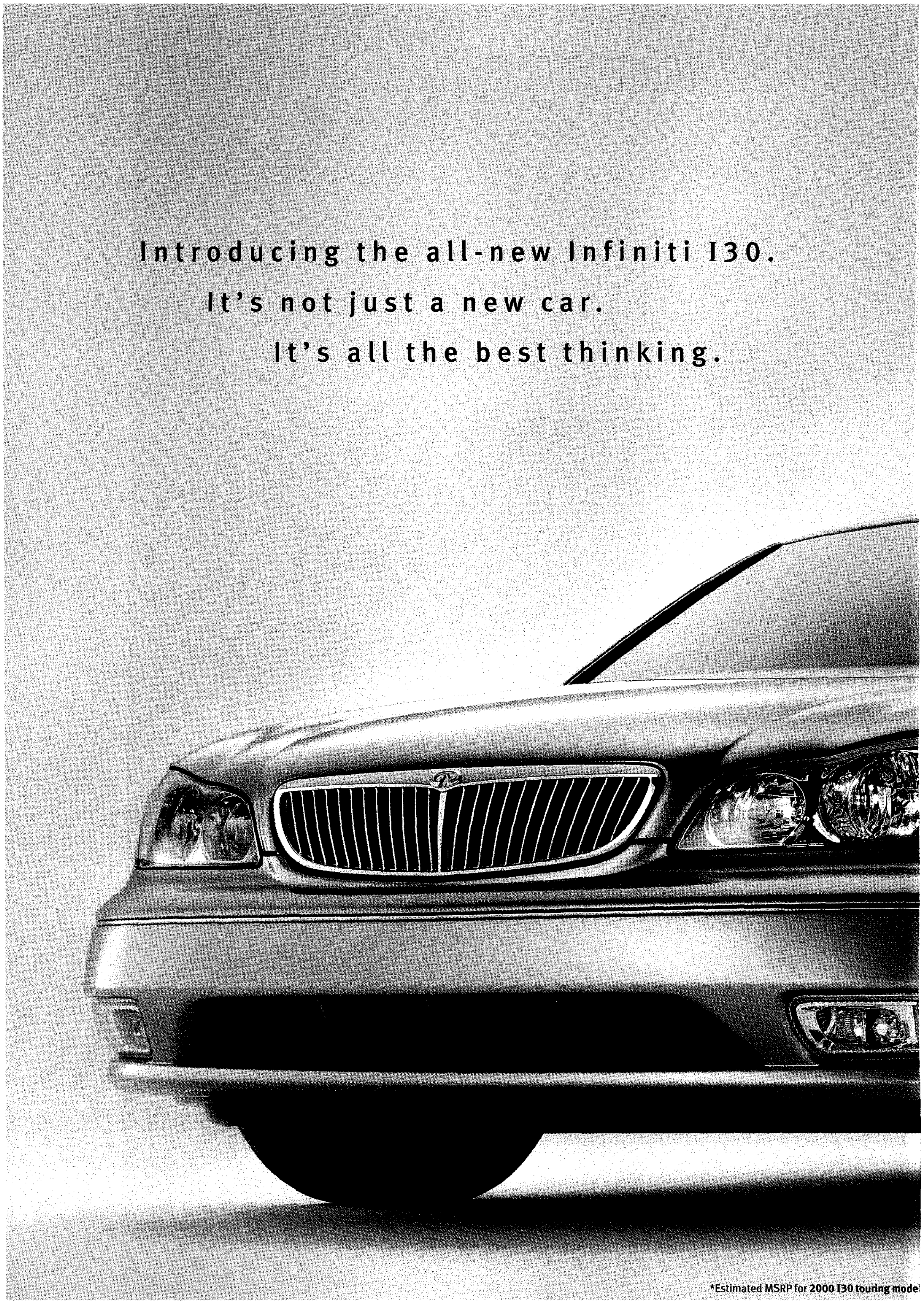
Dance Theatre Workshop—Sept. 14-15 at 8: Ellis Wood and her company in "Home for the Naked." (Through Oct. 3.) . . . ¶ Sept. 16-17 at 8: Gabri Christa and Cynthia Oliver in "Lukosimad." (Through Sept. 26.) . . . ¶ Sept. 18-19 at 8: The Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group in "Qoqoda" (Ndebele for "knocking") . . . . ¶ Sept. 21-22 at 8: David Parker and the Bang Group in "Beatification." (Through Oct. 10.) (219 W. 19th St. 924-0077.)

"Lava Love"—Sarah East Johnson's troupe, Lava, presents a slate of circus-skill routines—trapeze and balancing acts, hoop diving, human pyramids, hula-hoop and pogo-stick numbers—performed with subtleties of pace and emphasis taken from the world of dance. Johnson likes to compare both the power of women and the dynamics of love to volcanic forces, but she keeps such themes subterranean. Adults sense the undercurrent of muscular eroticism, kids love the dog act. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. 226-0051. Sept 16-17 at 8 and Sept. 18-19 at 3 and 8. Through Oct. 2.)

"Body Politic"—The choreographers Terry Creach, of New York, and Vicente Silva, of Mexico City, merge their separate five-member companies for a sort of evening-length NAFTA of dance. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Sept. 15-18 at 8.)

Pilar Rioja—The marquesa of Spanish dance offers a valuable lesson in the regional variations of the form. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. Sept. 16 at 7, Sept 18 at 8, and Sept. 19 at 3. Through Sept. 26.)


1
Great ideas are the fuel of progress.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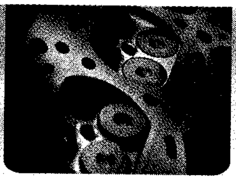

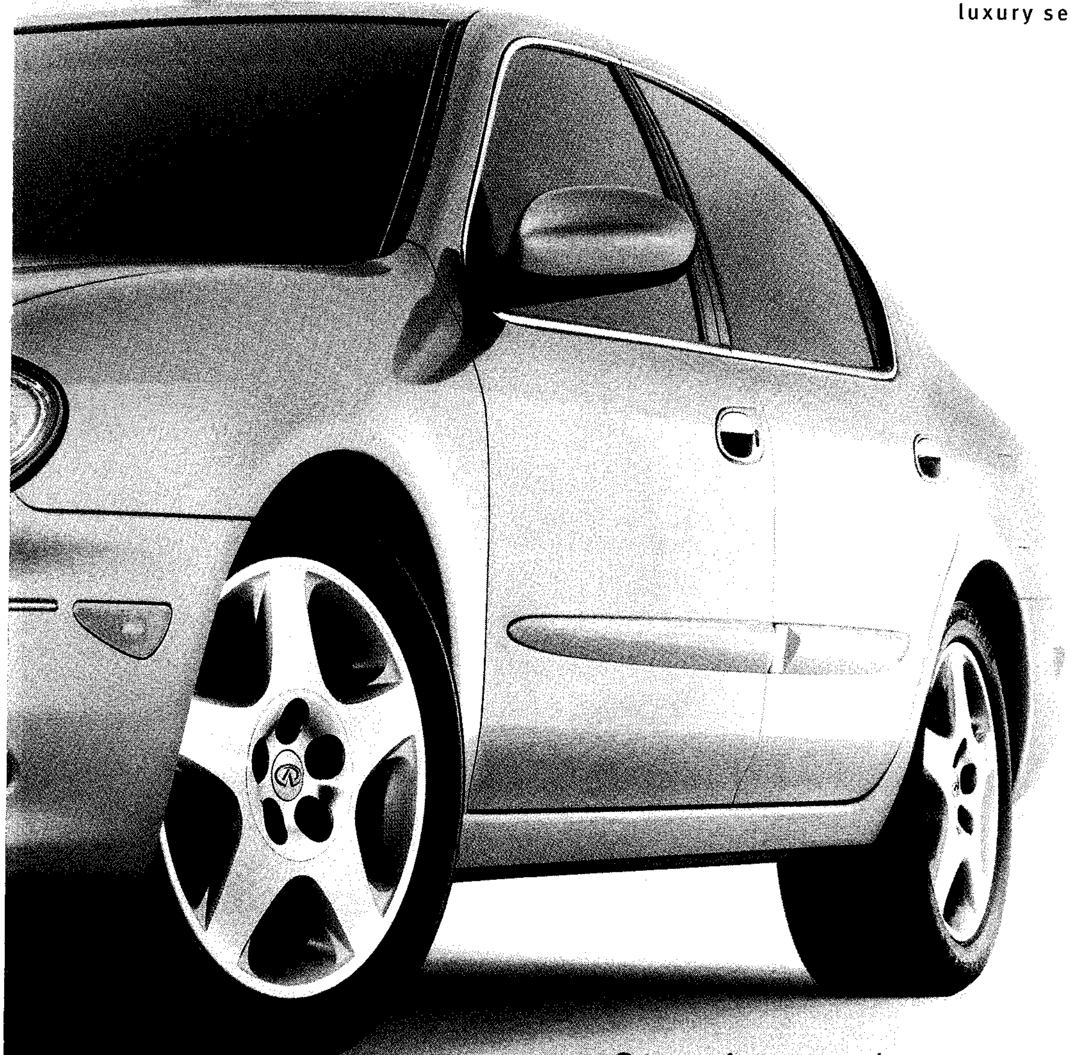

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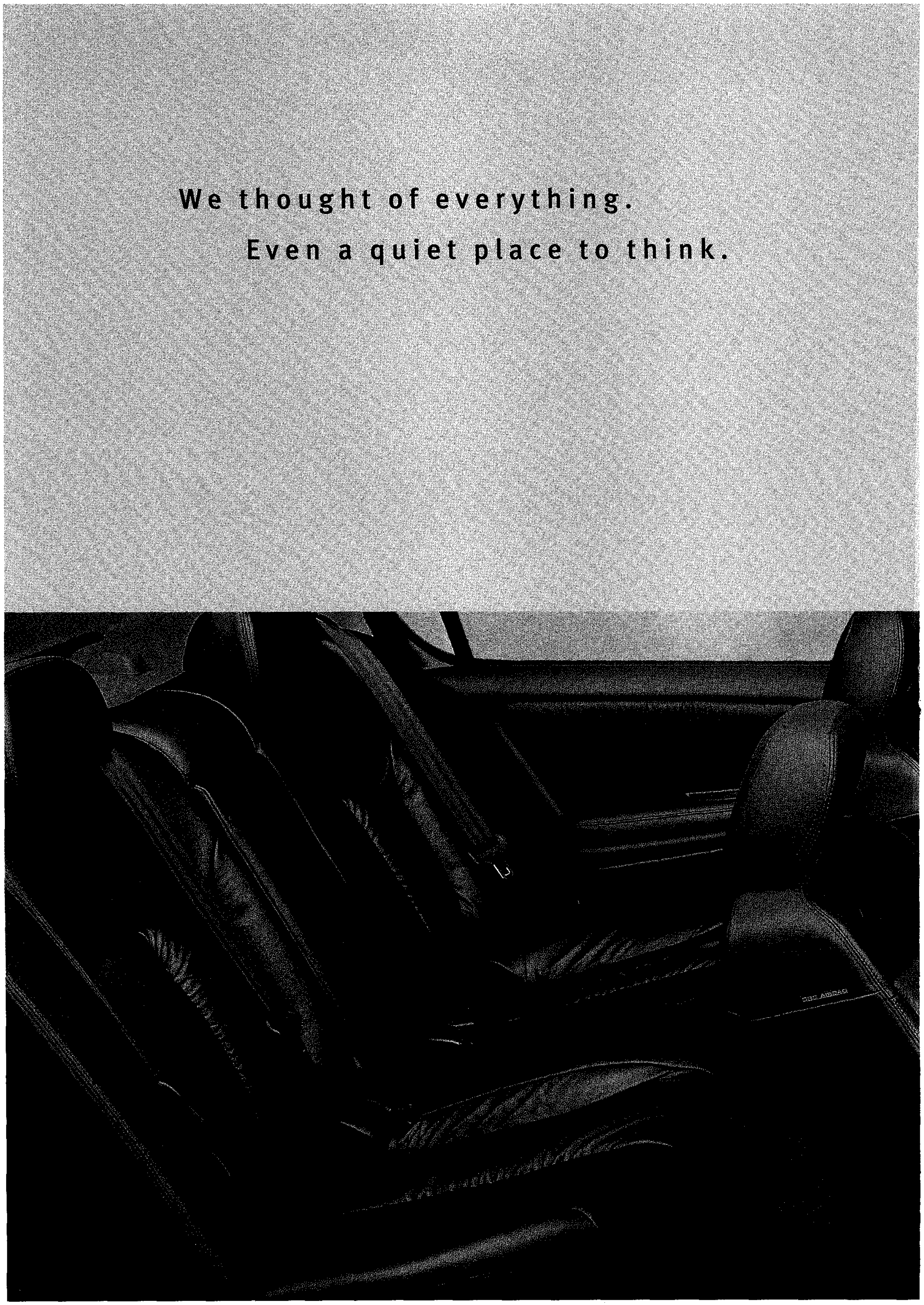
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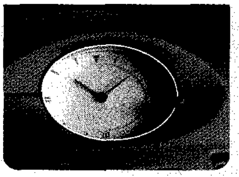
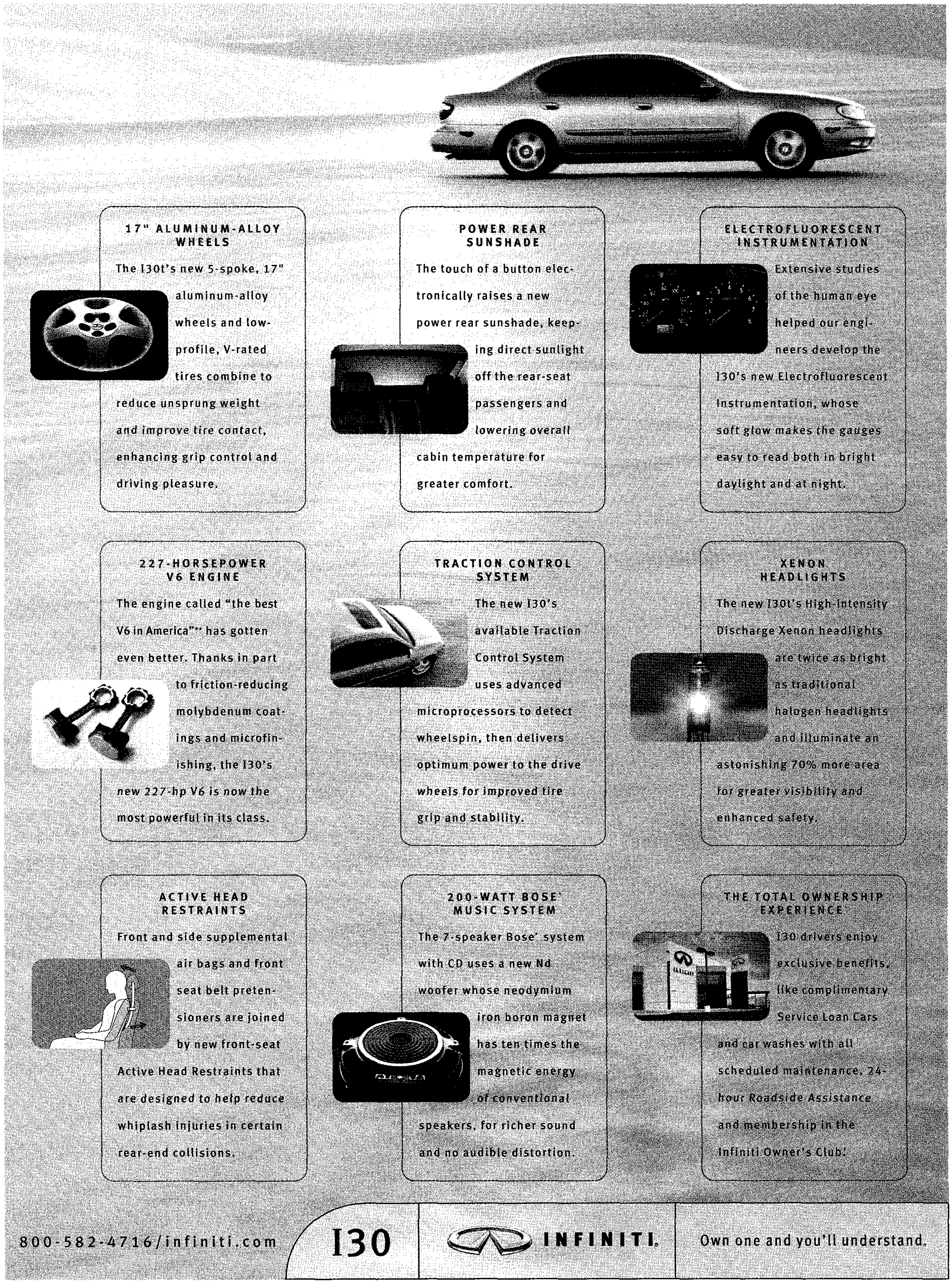


Active Head Restraints that are uncommon in its class, to luxury touches like a custom-tuned Bose® audio system and power rear sunshade that would be a surprise in any class. Where do the bright ideas stop? On the new I30, they don't.



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NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Cheap Trick / Guided by Voices—The band that lives up to its name more than any other: they may be the ultimate put-on, but they're a hell of a good time. / The Dayton-based lo-fi combo whose ringleader, Robert Pollard, picked up his flair for finger painting with words as a fourth-grade teacher. The group's latest album, "Do the Collapse," is produced by Ric Ocasek, and it's their slickest, most fully formed collection to date. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Sept. 15 at 7:15.)

CMJ MusicFest '99—The opening-night concert in this annual gathering of bands (most of the club gigs this week are part of CMJ) is laced with electronica. That knob-twirling genre hasn't led to the financial windfall that record companies were praying for (they're seeing better results with teenybopper girls and angry white guys instead), but it remains a powerful creative force. The lineup includes hip-hop pioneers the Jungle Brothers, master remixer Aphrodite, London sensation the Wiseguys (one guy, Touché, really) and turntablist Cut Chemist. The odd act out is Femi Kuti, the son of Nigerian Afro-beat innovator Fela Kuti, who, in what could be the highlight of the festival, will appear with his sixteen-piece band. (Roxy, 515 W. 18th St. 307-7171. Sept. 15 at 8. For more information about the MusicFest, which continues through Sept. 18, call 516-498-3150 or visit www.cmj.com/Marathon99.)

Chemical Brothers—The excellent British duo that was once destined to save the ailing music business. It was a nice dream, but it wasn't meant to be. Don't let the marketplace fool you, however. Their freestyle approach makes for orgasmic music that appeals to both dance-floor purists and mainstream rockers. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. Sept. 15-16 at 8.)

Bernard Allison—The son of legendary bluesman Luther Allison, guitarist Bernard grew up with a veritable "Who's Who" of the genre. As a child he hung out with Muddy Waters and Albert King and went on to apprentice under Koko Taylor. (World Financial Center Plaza, Battery Park City. No tickets necessary. Sept. 16 at 12:15.)

The B. B. King Blues Music Festival—Life gets ever faster, but the septuagenarian bluesman still takes it slow. His guitar playing has evolved into a ritual, each note massaged into an ecstatic sheen. With the Kenny Wayne Shepherd Band and Tower of Power. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Sept. 16 at 7.) . . . ¶ The soulful singer Robert Cray and the Memphis Horns join King for a concert by the shore. (Jones Beach Theatre. 516-221-1000. Sept. 18 at 6:30.)

Carnegie Hall Celebrates Betty Comden and Adolph Green—With Nathan Lane, Phyllis Newman, Faith Prince, Bobby Short, and Elaine Stritch. (247-7800. Sept. 16-17 at 7:30.)

John Prine—In 1971, when Prine first emerged on the folk scene with frank, disturbing songs like "Hello in There" and "Sam Stone," Kris Kristofferson commented, "No way somebody this young could be writing so heavy." Now, as he approaches fifty, this veteran sounds younger than ever. His independent 1991 comeback, "The Missing Years," won a Grammy and went gold—not bad for a do-it-yourself shot in the dark. His delightful new disk, "In Spite of Ourselves," features duets with such country singers as Connie Smith, Trisha Yearwood, Lucinda Williams, and Emmylou Harris. With another great vocalist, Iris DeMent, who also contributes to Prine's new album. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Sept. 16 at 8.)

Jazz Composers Collective—One of the most interesting of the new-jazz ensembles that have formed during the nineties, Ben Allison and Medicine Wheel is distinguished by the leader's bantering bass work and his adventurous writing, which gives saxophonists Ted Nash and Michael Blake and pianist Frank Kimbrough plenty to sink their teeth into. With saxophonist Dave Binney. (Jazz Performance Space, New School, 55 W. 13th St. 995-1552. Sept. 16 at 8.)

Jazz at Lincoln Center—Duke Ellington will forever be identified with his big band (what he called "My instrument"), but his small-group work can stand on its own as some of the most magnificent jazz ever made. Members of the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, as well as guests—including saxophonist Joe Lovano, trumpeter Nicholas Payton, and vocalist Dianne Reeves—add lustre to already gleaming material. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Sept. 16-18 at 8.)

Don Braden Quartet—Braden has all the makings of a tenor-saxophone contender. Live, he's a ripsnorter who combines the pleasures of youthful exuberance with historical knowledge that honors the masters without fawning over them. (Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. 708-9480. Sept. 17 at 5:30.)

Billy Bragg—With guitarist Freedy Johnston. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Sept. 18 at 8.)

Jefferson Starship—Members of the original sixties incarnation of Jefferson Airplane—Marty Balin, Paul Kantner, Jack Casady—plus a guest vocalist, Diana Mangano, make their Carnegie Hall début. (247-7800. Sept. 18 at 8.)

CLUBS

(Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Sept. 21: **KINKY FRIEDMAN.** With such delicate titles as "Ride 'em Jewboy," it's easy to see why Friedman is too outrageous for the country-music mainstream. "Get Your Biscuits in the Oven and Your Buns in the Bed" didn't exactly endear him to the folk community, either. No wonder he turned to writing mystery novels. A true American original.

Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Sept. 15: The glistening neo-psychedelic art rock of the **SUPER FURRY ANIMALS,** a band out of Cardiff, Wales, which started its career singing in Welsh but has since converted to English in its conquest of the British charts. With the indie pop of **THOSE BASTARD SOULS.** Sept. 17: **BETTIE SERVEERT.** This Amsterdam quartet (the name is Dutch for "Betty serves," a reference to some long-forgotten tennis legend) plays deeply satisfying garage rock with a lean, let's-make-a-record-in-a-day sound. It's a sunny alternative to a lot of overproduced American rock and roll. Sept. 18: Ultra-sweet, cutesy-pie Scottish pop with **BIS.**

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Sept. 15: The wacky, all-female power trio known as **CAKE LIKE** and singer-songwriter **PETER SALETT.** Sept. 16: Versus guitarist Richard Baluyat's solo project, **WHYSALL LANE.** Sept. 18: **MIKE VIOLA AND THE CANDY BUTCHERS.** Viola's latest release is the aptly titled "Falling Into Place," his first full-length album in a career that's included singing the title song for Tom Hanks's movie "That Thing You Do!" and outlasting all the original members in his four-year-old band. Viola's an excellent songwriter, and this album is well worth the wait. With **SALTINE,** featuring former Posies front man Ken Stringfellow, and the poppy punk of **THE FIGGS.**

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—Sept. 18: A night of good old-fashioned rock and roll with **THE HELLACOPTERS,** the **MURDER CITY DEVILS, ZEN GUERRILLA,** the **BLACK HALOS,** and **THE GO.** . . . ¶ Next door, at CB's Gallery, Sept. 20: Singer-songwriter **HAROLD AMBLER** stops by with his trio.

Copacabana, 617 W. 57th St. (582-2672)—Sept. 16: **RUBÉN BLADES.** The Panamanian-born poet laureate of salsa who brought Latin music into the electronic age with his remarkable 1984 album, "Buscando América," turns his back on the current Latin wave. His new album, "Tiempos," features

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the classically trained Costa Rican quartet Editus and is more attuned to *la vida triste* than *la vida loca*.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Sept. 15: *The whimsical power pop of Boston's* **PAPAS FRITAS,** the sweet disco beats of Atlanta's **FLORALINE,** and the electronic chamber music of Chicago's **ALUMINUM GROUP.** The **MINGUS BIG BAND** packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Sept. 15: **THE FUNKY METERS.** Sept. 16: Having earned post-punk immortality as the force behind Hüsker Dü and pop kudos with the more nuanced, misanthropic Sugar, **BOB MOULD** has now entered the elder-statesman phase of his complicated career. Sept. 17: **JOHN POPPER,** the extroverted harmonica virtuoso and singer for Blues Traveler, stops by with his band. With the **BOTTLE ROCKETS,** a hirsute combo from Festus, Missouri, which has mastered the Sturm und Twang of deep-fried rock and roll, and local popsters **MARCY PLAYGROUND.** Sept. 18: The emotionally confrontational **HENRY ROLLINS.**

Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. (539-8770)—The fierce and uncompromising singer **TOSHI REAGON,** here Sept. 17-18 with her band Big Lovely, once turned down a major record deal because the suits wanted to reshape her image. After years of releasing her records herself, she's found a home on the indie label Razor & Tie. Her latest album, "The Righteous Ones," packs a wallop, and her live shows shower retro funk, urban blues, and folk on the audience with evangelical fervor. To hear her is to believe.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Sept. 15: **SPARKLEHORSE,** the pet project of chimney sweep and slacker extraordinaire Mark Linkous. With lazy rhythms and fuzz-box vocals, he chronicles America as a kind of pleasant ruin. With **WHEAT.** Sept. 17: **MAN OR ASTROMAN?** These space-age stowaways from Alabama play lo-fi surf music punctuated with sci-fi samples from the fifties. With the Philadelphia funk of **DELTA 72** and the New Jersey rock of the **SWINGING NECKBREAKERS.** Sept. 18-19: The **RACHEL'S,** a Louisville octet specializing in lushly orchestrated atmospheric pop. With **DAMON & NAOMI.** The former backbone of Galaxie 500, bassist and vocalist Naomi Yang and drummer Damon Krukowski have been making haunting music founded on Yang's velvety voice since the demise of that cult favorite earlier in the decade.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—Sept. 16: **BETTIE SERVEERT** (see the Bowery Ballroom).

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Sept. 17: The **PERNICE BROTHERS,** who have grown too big for their alt-country britches and are now full-fledged popsters. Also on the bill are the barroom blues of **MALCOM HOLCOMB,** a duet set with Mekons veterans **SALLY TIMMS** and **JON LANGFORD,** and the **BOTTLE ROCKETS** (see Irving Plaza).

Tonic, 107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—Sept. 16: **ELLIOTT SHARP'S CARBON.** Armed with his aberrant homemade double-neck guitar, a small factory of digital effects, and a craving for sounds not heard above Houston Street, Sharp is a sonic virtuoso. Carbon is his art-noise band. The New York City-based Brazilian-born guitarist **VINICIUS CANTUÁRIA,** who has written hit songs for Caetano Veloso, Gal Costa, and other superstars from his homeland, takes the stage at midnight.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Sept. 18: Jungle Sky Records and OM Records present "Funk: A Celebration of American Breakbeat Culture," showcasing the disk-jockey skills of **AMERICAN SPACE TRAVELERS, MING & FS, DJ SOULSLINGER, DJ WALLY,** and others.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Sept. 16-18: **THE JAZZ TRIBE** features saxophonist **BOBBY WATSON,** trumpeter **JACK WALRATH,** pianist **RONNIE MATTHEWS,** bassist **CURTIS LUNDY,** drummer **VICTOR LEWIS,** and percussionist **RAY MANTILLA.** Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Sept. 19: **PAT MARTINO AND JOYOUS LAKE** and the **JOHN SCOFIELD** quartet. His iconic stature now firmly etched in *stone, the sleek and thoughtful guitarist* Martino has refined the knowledge and experience of four decades' worth of playing into a signature poetic sound. / Guitarist Scofield favors tricky, asymmetrical lines over generic flash. Where his peers tend to be marathon runners, he's an ambler. The key to his appeal is simple: within this cultivated improviser beats the heart of a twisted bluesman; Scofield flaunts the funk, grabs the groove, and generally proves that, for a father figure to a younger generation, he's still got plenty of juice. Dining.

PREACHER MAN: *It's been nearly twenty years since a fiery young lad from Barking, East London, named Billy Bragg started plucking at his guitar and imploring the world, in a thick Cockney accent, to embrace equal measures of socialism and romance. With Thatcher, Reagan, and Brezhnev running things, Bragg's left-ist political theatre and earnest bedroom theatrics made him a celebrity at home and earned him a devoted following on campuses in the United States. The collapse of Communism knocked him off his soapbox, but he picked himself up beautifully and in 1991 released "Don't Try This at Home," which featured the love-happy hit "Sexuality." For several years Bragg spent more time at home than onstage, partly to raise a child; he resurfaced last year with the excellent album "Mermaid Avenue," a reworking of the songs of his hero Woody Guthrie. Expect plenty of heartfelt original material and Bragg's signature droll banter when he comes to Town Hall on September 18. He's put together a new band in support of a just-released collection of rarities and B sides entitled "Reaching to the Converted."*

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Sept. 19: **JIM HALL** and **DAVE HOLLAND** have so *completely transcended their instruments* that it's best just to consider them world-class improvisers rather than supreme masters of the guitar (Hall) and bass (Holland). A duo set between the two was so inevitable that, of course, it's taken thirty years to happen. This brief encounter should produce intimate and startling music. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.**

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Sept. 21: **PARADOX TRIO.** Point man Matt Darriau plays a variety of instruments, including reeds, flutes, and *gaida* (a Bulgarian bagpipe), with a versatility that is mirrored by the group's range of music. This quartet (that's the paradox) works hard at making joyful music with an edge—from klezmer to offbeat Balkan tunes—and it all happens with apparent ease.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through Sept. 16: The **THOMAS CLAUSEN** quartet. Sept. 17-19: The **LOUIS HAYES** quintet. Hayes doesn't get the press that his peers routinely do, but he remains one of the greatest hard-bop drummers around. With experience as the rhythmic muscle for Cannonball Adderley and Oscar Peterson, he knows how to keep a band solid and swinging. Dining.

Up Over Jazz Cafe, 351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—Sept. 17-18: The **GEORGE COLEMAN** quartet. Coleman is a marvel; there isn't a sax player who knows his instrument better, or one who imparts so much knowledge in every marathon solo.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Sept 26: Jazz doesn't want for master pianists, but there's only one **TOMMY FLANAGAN,** who has settled in for a two-week run. Tone, touch, taste, technique—he's got it all. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Zinc Bar, 90 W. Houston St. (477-8337)—Sept. 14-15: The **MARK WHITFIELD** trio. A young guitarist with chops to spare and a bit too much desire to prove it, Whitfield has the funky fluidity of a pre-pop George Benson and a flair for gospel and blues.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—As part of the run-up to the museum's exhibition of Ingres portraits, which opens in October, "Costume and Character in the Age of Ingres" gathers examples of the court fashions popular in the artist's heyday, from undergarments (chemises, corsets, petticoats, crinolines) to elaborately detailed formal wear in the sort of vibrant colors and opulent fabrics that Ingres depicted. Through Nov. 21. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"To be a good Abstract Expressionist painter," Robert Rauschenberg once said, "you have to be able to feel really sorry for yourself." That was something that Rauschenberg, perhaps the world's most angstless and ebullient artist, was not able to do. Instead, he began making a kind of bemused, cheerful anti-Abstract Expressionism, an art that combined the viscous freedom of Ab Ex brushwork with the astringent presence of trash and bric-a-brac. The result, as a small exhibition of his nineteen-fifties "Combine" paintings reminds us, was magic: for a few years Rauschenberg couldn't put two things together in an uninteresting way. The identical-twin paintings at the heart of the show, "Factum I" and "Factum II" (the

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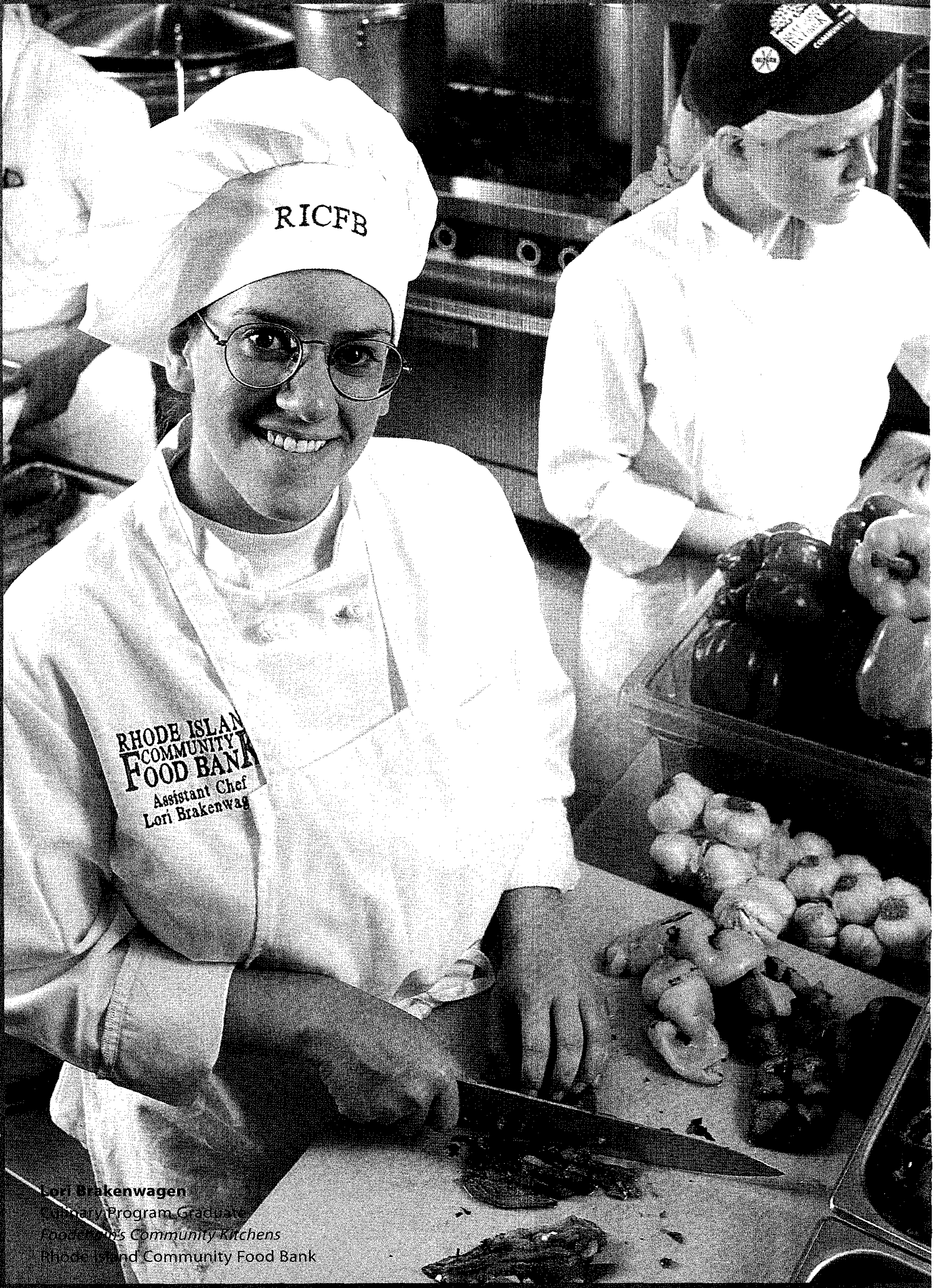
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latter is a new acquisition, the former on loan from the L.A. MOCA), represent the peak of this amazing period. Like a great athlete, Rauschenberg performs a freaky, unrepeatable feat—and then repeats it, just because you thought he couldn't. Through Oct. 5. . . . ¶ "Different Roads: Automobiles for the Next Century." Through Sept. 21. . . . ¶ "The Un-Private House." Rather than just present his selection of twenty-six recent house designs as the lively grab bag that it is, curator Terence Riley tries to dress it up as a form of cultural trend-spotting. As far as ideas go, this show is pure bluff. A couple of the projects here—most notably Shigeru Ban's hilarious Curtain Wall house—are apparently intended for clients who have nothing to hide from their neighbors, but for the most part the desire for privacy seems to be on the rise. With their lap pools, ten-thousand-volume libraries, home offices, and high-tech multimedia amenities ("Residents can entertain friends who live thousands of miles away"), most of these lavish dwellings seem like scaled-down variants of Superman's Fortress of Solitude. But, if you set ideas aside, the show is a delight: it's thrilling to see so many genuinely adventurous, even kooky, home designs, and the abundance of scale models makes the exhibition unusually accessible to non-architects. Through Oct. 5. . . . ¶ "Fame After Photography." Guest curators Carole Kismaric and Marvin Heiferman offer an almost unintelligible, jam-packed exhibition of printed, photographic, and cinematic materials that illustrate the bliss and blight of our celebrity-driven culture. For the patient viewer, there are plenty of droll, pathetic, and even aesthetic delights, e.g., a series of publicity pictures of Hollywood's most enduring Medusa, Joan Crawford, and Timothy Greenfield-Sanders's strikingly empathetic portrait of a very pretty Monica Lewinsky. Three of Andy Warhol's famous and seldom seen "Screen Tests" are exceptional. Did you know that Susan Sontag did one? Through Oct. 5. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"Andy Warhol: The Last Supper." In January, the Guggenheim's downtown branch yielded its first floor to Prada, making this address into more of a super-gallery than a boutique museum. "The Last Supper," their first show since the reduction, suits the new space well. Although the series, Warhol's largest and the last before his death, in 1987, was first shown in the Palazzo Stelline in Milan, across the street from the original in the Santa Maria delle Grazie, the questions it poses about art and merchandise seem meant for today's SoHo. In the most inviting and provocative pieces, portions of the world's most reproduced painting are covered with familiar logos: the Wise Chips owl, looking right at Jesus with an eyebrow raised; the Camel camel, hovering above the festivities; and an old Charles Atlas-style ad that reads "Be a somebody with a body," superimposed over the body of Christ. It's miraculously substantive, for Warhol. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Most of the museum is closed for the installation of "The American Century: Art & Culture 1900-2000 (Part II: 1950-99)," which opens Sept. 26. The fifth-floor gallery remains open, at reduced admission.

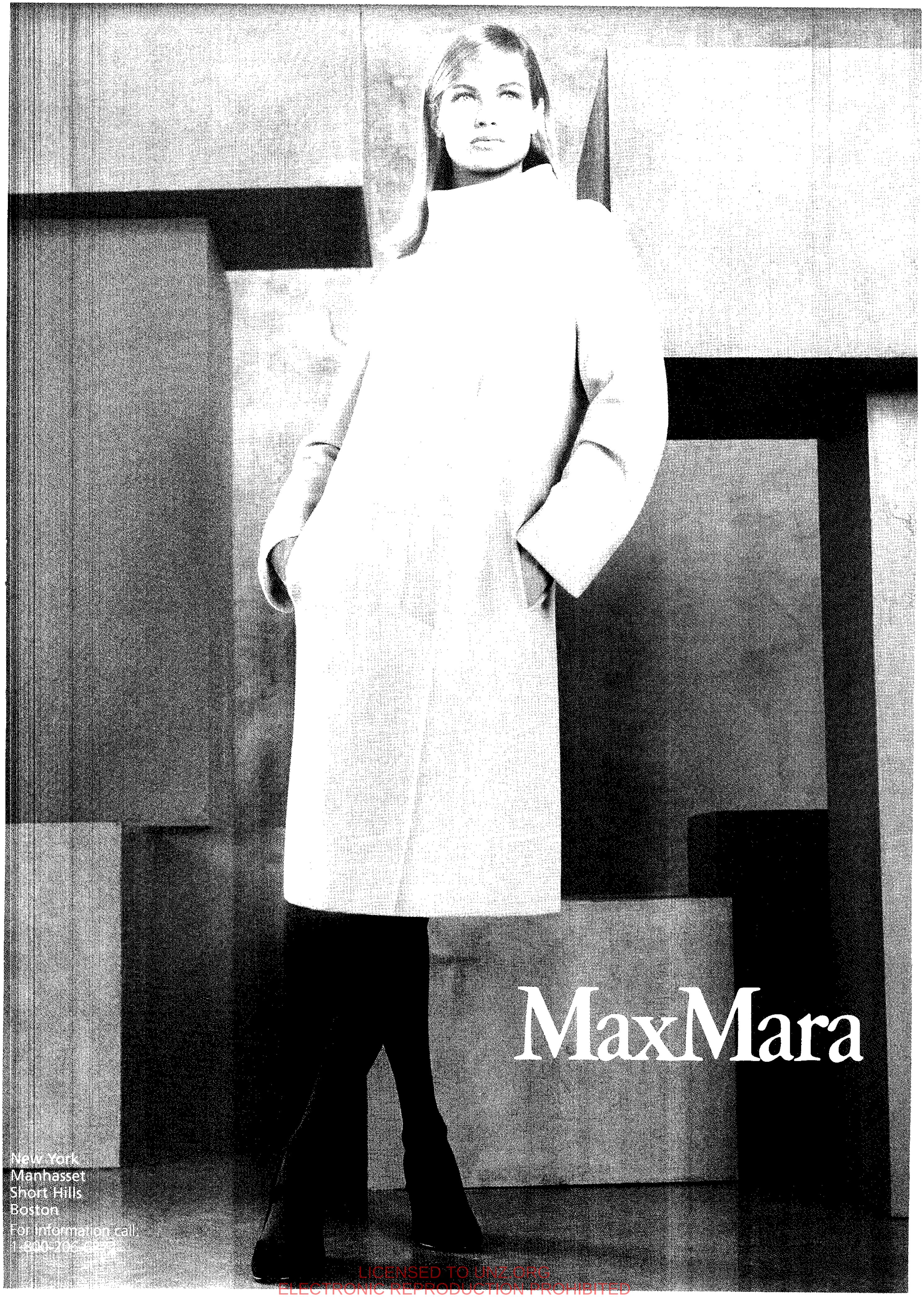
American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—At the center of the new Gottesman Hall of Planet Earth is an eight-foot hemispherical model of our mother ship, rigged with an internal projection system that displays her clouds, oceans, and continents, all in motion. It's the kind of high-tech toy you can imagine Bill Gates installing as a chandelier. Ranged around it are a hundred and sixty-eight chunks of the planet itself. Along with relatively familiar specimens of marble, coral, and sandstone, there are glistening buds of black pillow lava, an ice core, a chimney of pure sulfur, and a ventifact—a rock carved by windblown sand—from Antarctica (it looks as if Henry Moore might have left it there). . . . ¶ "The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition." Through Oct. 11. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Winslow Homer: Illustrating America" displays a hundred and twenty wood engravings, nearly half of Homer's output during the early years of his career, when he worked as a freelance illustrator for publications like *Ballou's Pictorial* and *Harper's Weekly*. Except for a group of pictures depicting camp life in the Union Army, most are genteel courting and sporting scenes: ice-skating parties, croquet games, frolicking swimmers, and bewhiskered gents roughing it in the Adirondacks. It's a pleasure to watch Homer's stiff draftsmanship grow gradually more supple, but the blinkered gaiety of these pictures does occasionally become oppressive. No wonder that, at the end of his life, the artist devoted himself solely to penitential scenes of pounding surf. Through Oct. 10. (Open Wednesdays and Fridays, 10 to 5; Thursdays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St. (956-3535)—"Spirits of the Cloth: Contemporary Quilts by African American Artists." Largely figurative quilts, either tableaux done with appliqués or, as in L'Merchie Frazier's "From a Birmingham Jail," with accumulations of photographs, texts, and beads. Among the more traditional works (that is, pieced and sewn), Virginia Harris's complex, tumbling geometric patterns stand out, and Carolyn Mazloomi's intense black-and-white graphics will make your eyes pop. Downstairs, "Quilts Across America" offers a junior vision of peace through sewing, with fifty cloth squares on the subject of the year 2050, made at primary schools across the country. Through Oct. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (534-1672)—"Fashion on Stage: Couture for the Broadway Theater, 1910 to 1955." The dresses and photographs on display here don't show the oversized flounces and frogs expected of costume design—in fact, if it weren't for the extravagance of Valentina's cowl necks and fur-trimmed hems or the bead-and-sequin embroidery over Mainbocher's cotton-eyelet short-sleeved dress, you could almost wear these clothes. In several pictures, a young Katharine Hepburn inhabits them with extraordinary verve. For those captivated by theatre ephemera, the press clips, paper dolls, and "honey-brown curls" of Irene Castle's hair should satisfy. . . . ¶ "Gotham Comes of Age: New York Through the Lens of the Byron Company 1892-1942." Joseph Byron and his son Percy specialized in ship and theatre photography, which means these interior scenes are close and compact, with every inch of space in use. An exuberant self-portrait of the elder Mr. Byron also stands out, with the subject holding the sides of his camera as if he were pinching a child's cheeks. Through Sept. 26. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"In Company: Robert Creeley's Collaborations" collects evidence of the Black Mountain poet's ceaseless joint efforts: with Francesco Clemente, Jim Dine, Donald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Sultan, Alex Katz, John Chamberlain, Susan Rothenberg, Joe Brainard, R. B. Kitaj, Sol LeWitt, Robert Indiana, and Georg Baselitz, to name just the artists. Through Jan. 13. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St. (864-4500)—On the first floor, works by sixteen of the nearly ninety artists who have passed through the museum's artists-in-residence program are on display. The strongest tend to be by recent alumni, including such well-known younger artists as Leonardo Drew, Alison Saar, and Nari Ward. Over all, sculpture predominates, and the influence of Frank Stella, at a low ebb in the rest of the art world, proves unexpectedly pervasive here. The second-floor exhibition, "From the Studio"—more aptly titled "Flip, Funk, and Fantasy" in the catalogue essay—showcases work by this year's three resident artists. Manuel Acevedo makes printed flip books in which his own haiku gradually appear. Elia Alba arranges thousands of muslin baby booties into geometric patterns. Xenobia Bailey (the funk element of the trio) offers a sloppy, wacky installation, less professional than the other two, but more engaging. Titled "Paradise Under Reconstruction: A Cosmic Moonlodge," it features an altar full of incense and feathers, a seven-foot-tall mannequin based on African totems, and a wall of brilliantly colored crocheted disks, as dizzying as they are delightful. Through Oct. 3. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

James Lee Byars (1932-97)—Equal parts shaman and charlatan, this Detroit-born artist developed a precious, Zen-like style of artmaking that calls out for a Mike Myers parody. In his seventies heyday, Byars liked to appear in a gold suit, reciting gnomic phrases and distributing tiny slips of paper. (For one exhibition, he stood silently in front of the Guggenheim Museum, holding a gold disk that read "Do Not Touch This Holy Building.") The two sculptures here, sitting in a bare room, are characteristic. The more flamboyant one, "The Rose Table of Perfect," is a sphere composed of three thousand three hundred and thirty-three long-stemmed roses. Over the course of the exhibition, the roses gradually wither and die, becoming either a metaphor or simply a vast ball of potpourri. Through Sept. 26. (Werner, 21 E. 67th St. 988-1623. Open Mondays.)

"Another Place"—Works by a disparate group of five artists, ranging from Steve DiBenedetto, who paints lusciously creepy images of carnivals, to Nikko Sedgwick, who makes abstract photographs out of hair gel. The most genuinely transporting work, however, is "Pleasure Grounds," a goofy, lovely installation by the environmental sculptor Lee Boroson. Using parachute silk and electric blowers, Boroson has created a breathy, bulging room, part lily pond, part cloudscape. Imagine a cross between Robert Irwin's recent installations at Dia and the cartoony, pneumatic architecture of Dr. Seuss. Through Sept. 18. (Helman, 20 W. 57th St. 245-2888.)

Season Openers—**DEBRA BERMINGHAM** and **PAUL WONNER,** DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111. Both shows through Oct. 2. . . . **HERMAN BRAUN-VEGA,** Haime, 41 E. 57th St. 888-3550. Open Mondays; through Oct. 2. . . . **GRISHA BRUSKIN** and **MAGDALENA ABAKANOWICZ,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays; both shows through Oct. 5. . . . **LUISA CALDWELL,** Sculpture Center, 167 E. 69th St. 879-3500. Through Oct. 16. . . . **BEAUFORD DELANEY** and **HAROLD COUSINS,** Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St. 247-0082. Both shows through Oct. 30. . . . **CATHY DE MONCHAUX,** Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 744-7400. Opens Sept. 16. . . . **SIMON DINNERSTEIN,** ACA, 41 E. 57th St. 644-8300. Through Oct. 2. . . . **HOLLY LANE,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122. Through Oct. 16. . . . **JAMES LECHAY,** Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 307-5730. Opens Sept. 15. . . . **CATHERINE LEE,** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. 315-0470. Through Oct. 16. . . . **BRUCE MC CALL,** James Goodman, 41 E. 57th St. 593-3737. Opens Sept. 16. . . . **ELIE NADELMAN,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606. Open Mondays; through Oct. 2. . . . **MARK PODWAL,** Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545. Through Sept. 25. . . . **TOM SACHS,** Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929. Through Oct. 25. . . . **JACQUES VILLEGLÉ,** Ubu, 16 E. 78th St. 794-4444. Through Oct. 23. . . . **HENRY WARD,** Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St. 664-0907. Through Oct. 2. . . . **STEVE WHEELER,** York, 21 E. 65th St. 772-9155. Opens Sept. 16. . . . **JACK YOUNGERMAN,** Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. 397-6780. Through Oct. 30.

"Matt, Moorpark, CA, 1985," by Dan Winters, at SABA.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Steven Parrino—Four objects that started out as glossy, black monochrome paintings. Parrino then deformed them in various ways: for example, by pulling the canvas off the stretchers and crumpling and restapling it to create a buckled, John Chamberlain-style surface. A simple idea, maybe, but the effect (all glittery highlights and valleys) is insidiously pleasing. An accompanying video of an "exotic dancer" listlessly performing in front of one Parrino's paintings, however, proves less so. Through Oct. 2. (Team, 527 W. 26th St. 279-9219.)

Season Openers—**HANS ACCOLA,** Eller, 529 W. 20th St. 206-6411. Through Oct. 9. . . . **BILL ADAMS,** Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555. Through Oct. 9. . . . **CÉLESTE BOURSIER-MOUGENOT,** Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Through Oct. 16. . . . **JOY EPISALLA,** Debs, 529 W. 20th St. 647-7080. Through Oct. 9. . . . **TILL FREIWALD,** Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 645-1701. Through Oct. 9. . . . **TOM GREGG,** Billis, 526 W. 26th St. 645-2621. Through Oct. 16. . . . **WILLIAM L. HAWKINS,** Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through Oct. 9. . . . **CLAIRE JERVERT,** Martz, 529 W. 20th St. 206-3686. Through Oct. 9. . . . **SUSANNE KÜHN,** Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 741-3318. Through Oct. 9. . . . **SOL LE WITT,** Cooper, 521 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Opens Sept. 15. . . . **OMAR LOPEZ-CHAHOUD,** DeChiara Stewart, 521 W. 26th St. 967-6007. Through Oct. 9. . . . **GILES LYON,** Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500. Through Oct. 16. . . . **HOLLY MILLER,** Clementine, 526 W. 26th St. 243-5937. Through Oct. 16. . . . **DAN PETERMAN,** Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000. Through Oct. 16. . . . **ALDO ROSSI,** Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999. Through Oct. 16. . . . **DAVID SHAPIRO,** Liebman Magnan, 552 W. 24th St. 255-3225. Through Oct. 16. . . . **ANDREAS SLOMINSKI,** Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100. Through Oct. 16. . . . **JOSEPH STASHKEVETCH,** Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752. Through Oct. 16. . . . **SU-EN WONG,** Stux, 529 W. 20th St. 352-1600. Through Oct. 16.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

John Singer Sargent (1856-1925)—A single full-length portrait (of Margaret Stuyvesant Rutherford White) and more than ninety works on paper, mostly charcoal drawings, from the collection of the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Anyone who doesn't understand why the great expatriate portraitist comes in for so much critical equivocation (even Sargent's friend Henry James acknowledged misgivings) should see this show. From the age of twelve on, his drawings are clean, agile, faultlessly proportioned. But they are also relentlessly bland, with hardly a glimmer of fresh perception or feeling. Sargent drew as if he were playing a perfect game of tennis—he is art's Bjorn Borg. It took paint, which resisted his virtuosity, to spark him into the fitful liveliness of his finest work. The two small watercolors here, both scintillating scenes of Venice, make everything else in the room look like it was done while the artist was sleepwalking. Through Oct. 30. (Grey Art Gallery, New York University, 100 Washington Sq. E. 998-6780.)

"Die Bücher Der Künstler"—Two ever-prominent sides of the German psyche, order and rebellion, are amusingly joined in this survey, which collects examples of artist's books published in Germany over the past thirty years. The presentation is Teutonically thorough: six hundred and fifty-one books, by two hundred and thirty-nine artists, housed in Plexiglas vitrines and organized by category. The books tend to be casually jokey, chaotic, and self-indulgent. Dieter Roth, for example, fills volume after volume with cursory scribbles, one to a page. For devotees of the genre, this is a bibliographical feast. For the rest of us, it has the look of a compulsively tidy stoop sale. Through Sept. 18. (Brooke Alexander, 59 Wooster St. 925-4338.)

"Spatial Interest"—Dutifully addressing themselves to the bland environment of the law office in which this group show takes place, the five artists involved have created various site-specific installations. Even the best of them, James Carl's filing-cabinet façades and Arnold Helbling's mural of airbrushed bookshelves, bespeak a spirit of due diligence rather than inspiration. Site specificity has generally worked out better in theory than in practice; here one can't help wishing that the artists had jettisoned it altogether. Through Oct. 2. (The Work Space, 96 Spring St. 219-2790.)

Season Openers—**KAREN ARM** and **BRETT REICHMAN**, P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642. Both shows through Oct. 9. . . . **FRANCESCO CLEMENTE**, Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441. Opens Sept. 18. . . . **CEAL FLOYER**, Kaplan, 48 Greene St. 226-6131. Through Oct. 9. . . . **SHIRAZEH HOUSHIARY**, Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753. Through Oct. 30. . . . **KATURAH HUTCHESON**, Kasmin, 74 Grand St. 219-3219. Through Sept. 30. . . . **OLIVIER MOSSET**, Brownstone, 39 Wooster St. 334-3455. Through Oct. 23. . . . **TOM NAKASHIMA**, Steinbaum Krauss, 132 Greene St. 431-4224. Opens Sept. 18. . . . **PEPÓN OSORIO**, Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232. Through Oct. 9. . . . **ALISON SAAR**, Kind, 136 Greene St. 925-1200. Opens Sept. 18. . . . **YUTAKA SONE**, Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074. Through Oct. 9. . . . **LANE TWITCHELL** and **MARGARET KILGALLEN**, Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300. Both shows through Oct. 9. . . . **NOT VITAL**, Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. 431-3685. Through Oct. 2.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Sotheby's—Asia week in New York's auction-and-antique community continues. Sept. 15: Chinese art works. . . . ¶ Sept. 16: Indian and Southeast Asian art. . . . ¶ Sept. 17-18: An exceptional assemblage of collectible wines, ranging from rare Bordeaux and Burgundy vintages to a strong selection of the finest Italian producers. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

Christie's—Sept. 15: An auction of Japanese and Korean works, especially notable for offerings of Japanese porcelains. . . . ¶ Sept. 16: Chinese sculpture, furniture, and other art works. . . . ¶ Sept. 17: Indian and Southeast Asian art. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.) . . . ¶ At **CHRISTIE'S EAST:** Memorabilia relating to space exploration, including one of Neil Armstrong's spacesuits, Gus Grissom's Apollo 1 spacecraft notebook, and some NASA items coated with lunar dust (for those whose earthly dust collections leave them somehow unfulfilled). (219 E. 67th St. 606-0400. Sept. 18.)

Doyle—An auction of furniture, decorative pieces, and paintings. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730. Sept. 16.)

Phillips—Early Chinese pottery, porcelain, and bronzes. (406 E. 79th St. 570-4830. Sept. 17.)

Swann—A sale of prints, drawings, and *livres d'artiste*. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. Sept. 16.)

Morell & Co.—The wine firm's first auction of the season includes an irresistible enticement for fans of fortified wines: a hundred and thirty lots of ancient port, sherry, and—especially—Madeira, much of it from the early nineteenth century. (Grand Havana Room, 666 Fifth Ave., 39th floor. Sept. 18. For information, call 307-4200.)

Arts of Pacific Asia Show—This beautifully presented semiannual show provides a forum for seventy noted international dealers working in Asian art, with its purview defined liberally enough to include such regions as India and Tibet, which are quite a hike from the Pacific Ocean. (69th Regiment Armory, Lexington Ave. at 25th St. Sept. 15-18. For more information, call 683-2434. . . . **NOTE:** A shuttle bus will be available to transport visitors between the 69th Regiment Armory and the various auction houses.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

"A Century of Times Square"—Photographs from the hundred-year-old archives of the New York *Times*. Opens Sept. 17. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

"Eyewitness 1999"—The best press photographs of 1998, selected by the World Press Photo Foundation. Opens Sept. 16. (North Bridge, World Financial Center, Battery Park City. Open daily, twenty-four hours.)

"Female"—Another gender-based group show curated by Vince Aletti. Among the dozens of artists on view are Marianne Courville, Bruce Cratsley, John Dugdale, Mitch Epstein, Emmet Gowin, Jacques Henri Lartigue, Vik Muniz, and Rosalind Solomon. Through Oct. 10. (Wessel and O'Connor, 242 W. 26th St. 242-8811. Open Sundays.)

"Five from Europe"—Works by Frantisek Drtikol, Roman Vishniac, Brassaï, Bill Brandt, and Robert Frank. Through Oct. 16. (Danziger, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 734-5300.)

International Center of Photography—"Sea Change: The Seascape in Contemporary Photography." Through Oct. 10. . . . ¶ "Myths, Dreams, and Realities in Contemporary Argentine Photography." Through Oct. 10. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

International Center of Photography Midtown—"Bill Brandt: A Retrospective." Through Oct. 31. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

Season Openers—**JENNIFER BOLANDE**, Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 19th St. 367-7474. Through Oct. 16. . . . **ALVIN BOOTH** and **FERENC BERKO**, Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255. Both shows through Oct. 9. . . . **ELINOR CARUCCI**, Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through Oct. 9. . . . **MITCH EPSTEIN**, Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St. 929-2262. Through Oct. 16. . . . **ADAM FUSS**, Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Through Oct. 16. . . . **SAMUEL GOTTSCHO**, Alan Klotz/Photocollect, 22 E. 72nd St. Closed Tuesdays; opens Sept. 15. . . . **JUSTINE KURLAND**, Callery, 433 W. 14th St. 741-6364. Opens Sept. 17. . . . **MARCUS LEATHERDALE**, Bridgewater/Lustberg & Blumenfeld, 560 Broadway. 941-6355. Opens Sept. 16. . . . **NIKKI S. LEE**, Tonkonow, 601 W. 26th St. 255-8450. Through Oct. 16. . . . **CONSTANTINE MANOS**, Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon; opens Sept. 16. . . . **MARIA MARTINEZ-CAÑAS**, Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747. Through Oct. 9. . . . **RICHARD MISRACH**, Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 989-7600. Through Oct. 23. . . . **YASUMASA MORIMURA**, Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 206-9100. Through Oct. 16. . . . **DAIDO MORIYAMA** and **REAGAN LOUIE**, Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930. Both shows open

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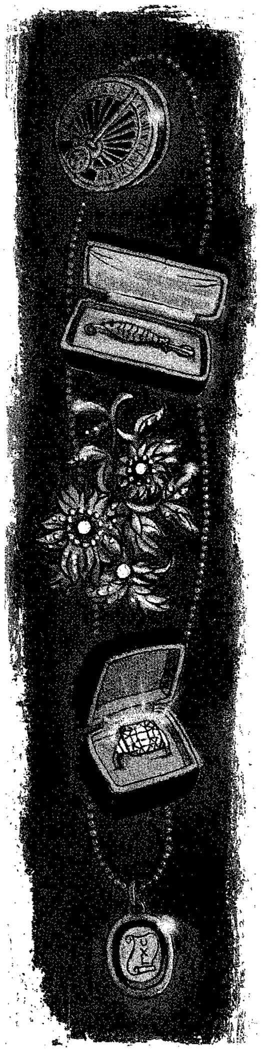
ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

Glittering Prizes

Before you shell out four figures for a pair of python boots or a bugle-beaded bustier, perhaps you should consider investing in something that doesn't have the potential to itch, pinch, make you look foolish, or otherwise disappoint. Antique jewelry, by its very nature, has stood the test of time; moreover, should fortune frown, you can rapidly turn it back into cash—which is more than can be said for those lavender lambskin pedal pushers you bought last season.

At **J. Mavec & Co.**, a proverbial jewel box with a little green awning (946 Madison Ave.; 517-7665), the owner says that she specializes in "the quirky, the witty, the whimsical, and the just plain ravishingly beautiful." Her frisky eye is evident in a late-Victorian bar pin sporting a diamond leaping trout ($1,150), still in its original box (S. Bloom, Glasgow), and a mid-century—twentieth, that is—gold sundial meant to function as a money clip ($1,250). Decidedly less frivolous is a circa-1930 diamond ring featuring delicate filigree, a 4.77-carat cushion-shaped central stone, and a $68,000 price tag—just the sort of thing William Randolph Hearst might have presented to Marion Davies, had he ever actually proposed to her.

Nothing costs more than $10,000 at **James II Galleries**, an old-fashioned emporium sequestered on the fourth floor of a Fifty-seventh Street office building (11 E. 57th St.; 355-7040). Among a plethora of Edwardian paste hearts and hundred-year-old Scottish agate garter pins is a collection of nineteenth-century translucent glass seals that have been transformed into necklaces, earrings, and the like. An opalescent example featuring a sheaf of wheat and the saucy legend "you deserve a thrashing" has been set in gold and turned into a pendant ($615); a seal with a more benign sentiment, in the form of a rebus reading "U X L," has been fitted with a silver bezel ($415).



The genteel confines of the Upper East Side are worlds away from the diamond district, where goods are conveyed in paper sacks instead of velvet coffers. At the Midtown Jewelry Exchange, diagonally across from the Gotham Book Mart, **Mary Finkelstein** (50 W. 47th St.; 719-1708) has been stocking world-class Victorian, Edwardian, and Art Deco baubles at her front counter for the past thirty-five years. Among the sombre Victorian pieces that dominate Finkelstein's window is a French brooch fully four inches long which has branches and blooms encrusted with smoldering mine-cut diamonds that have been set *en tremblante*, which means they'll shake fetchingly as you wave a pointer around the boardroom ($9,000).

Forty-seventh Street may be rough and tumble, but at least it has heating and air-conditioning. At the **Garage** (25th St. west of Sixth Ave.; 647-0707), which is part of the burgeoning Chelsea flea-market neighborhood, the atmosphere is so dank and musty you feel as if you're antiquing in England. Nevertheless, a passel of good things show up here, including, on a recent Sunday, the sort of wristwatch F. Scott Fitzgerald's Gloria Gilbert longed for as she trudged the luckless streets of Manhattan eighty years ago. ("Two o'clock by her little gold watch. She should have a new watch, one made in a platinum oblong and incrusted with diamonds. . . .") The circa-1920 example we found is 18-karat white gold, has emeralds along with diamonds surrounding its rectangular face ($5,600), and is offered for sale by **P.S. Unlimited**, a longtime Twenty-sixth Street concern that has lately set up shop along the western wall of the Garage's lower level. If, like Fitz's flapper, you can't afford bejeweled timepieces just now, P.S. Antiques offers a number of less daunting temptations, including a winsome Victorian rose-gold snake ring with a small diamond embedded in its tiny head for $550—about the same price as that crenellated camisole languishing on a rack at Century 21.

Sept. 16. . . . **IRVING PENN,** Pace Wildenstein (through Sept. 25) and Pace-MacGill (through Oct. 23), both at 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292. . . . **ALISON ROSSITER,** Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Through Oct. 16. . . . **COLLIER SCHORR,** 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121. Through Oct. 30. . . . **DAVID SEIDNER,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223. Opens Sept. 17. . . . **NANCY SHAVER,** Marcus, 578 Broadway. 226-3200. Through Oct. 2. . . . **JACK SPENCER,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Opens Sept. 16. . . . **ANDRÉ STEINER,** Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Opens Sept. 17. . . . **HIROSHI SUNAIRI,** Kreps, 520 W. 20th St. 741-8849. Through Oct. 8. . . . **DAN WINTERS,** SABA, 116 E. 16th St. 477-7722. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; opens Sept. 16.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Museum of the City of New York.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

New York City Opera—Sept. 15 at 7:30 and Sept. 18 at 1:30: "Madama Butterfly.". . . ¶ Sept. 16 at 7:30 and Sept. 18 at 8: "The Magic Flute," performed in English. . . . ¶ Sept. 17 at 8 and Sept. 19 at 1:30: Rossini's "Il Viaggio a Reims." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

West Side Opera—Presenting two concert performances of Strauss's "Die Fledermaus." (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. Sept. 16 at 1 and Sept. 19 at 2. Admission by contribution.)

Clarion Music Society—Frederick Hammond leads semi-staged performances of two dramatic works from the early seventeenth century: Monteverdi's Tasso-derived madrigal entertainment "Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda" (unveiled as a carnival diversion in Venice, in 1624), and "Fiera di Farfa," which is a section of "Chi Soffre, Speri," a collaborative work by Virgilio Mazzocchi and Marco Marazzoli which, at its 1639 première, in Rome, entered the history books as the first ever full-fledged comic opera. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Sept. 16 at 8.)

Amato Opera Company—This mom-and-pop theatre's fifty-second season—with the same mom and pop at the helm the whole time—opens with "La Traviata." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Sept. 18 at 7:30 and Sept. 19 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS

Manhattan Chamber Orchestra—Richard Auldon Clark leads the première of Osvaldo Lacerda's Suite for String Orchestra, in addition to the same composer's "Four Modal Pieces," Karel Husa's "Pastorale" (also for string orchestra) and "Four Short Pieces," and Weill's "Small Mahagonny" (with the Songfellows vocal ensemble). Martinů's Serenata No. 2 for two violins and viola completes the program. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Sept. 16 at 8.)

New Juilliard Ensemble—Joel Sachs leads pieces composed within the past decade, by Derek Bermel, Mary Finsterer, Heiner Goebbels, David Sawer, and Carlos Sánchez-Gutiérrez. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Sept. 18 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

"Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme"—Molière's *comédie-ballet*, staged (in English), with Lully's incidental music (played by Concert Royal) and Pierre Beauchamp's choreography of 1704 (realized by the New York Baroque Dance Company). (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. Sept. 18-19 at 8.)

City Island Baroque Ensemble—The Canadian violinist Lara St. John is the soloist in Vivaldi's "Four Seasons." (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. Sept. 19 at noon.)

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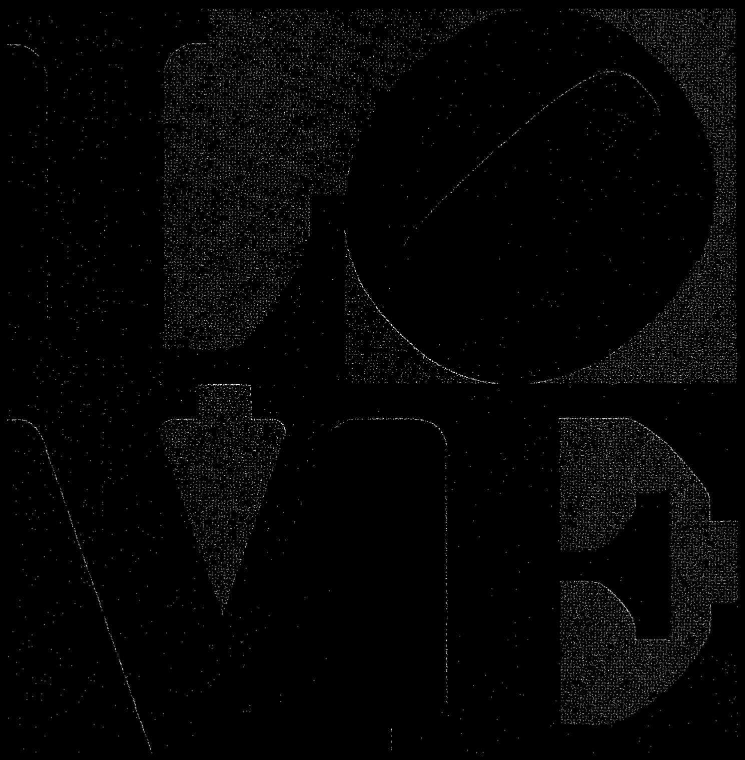

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Jupiter Symphony—Jens Nygaard conducts Franz von Suppé's "Poet and Peasant" Overture, Henri Vieuxtemps' Violin Concerto No. 5 (with Kyung Sun Lee), Kile Smith's "Variations on a Theme of Schubert" (the theme in question taken from the song "An mein Klavier"), and Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. Sept. 20 at 2 and 7 and Sept. 21 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

RECITALS

All Vows—The prayer "Kol Nidre," which resounds in synagogues on the eve of Yom Kippur, gets a workout several days early in the guise of the new "Kol Nidre Variations" by composer and pianist Ben Zebelman, who is joined in this première performance by violinist Elizabeth Chang and cellist Maureen McDermott. (Eldridge Street Synagogue, 12 Eldridge St. 978-8800. Sept. 15 at 7.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—The society's thirty-first season opens with an all-Mozart program that spotlights clarinettist David Shifrin (who also happens to be the group's artistic director). On the program are the three principal masterpieces Mozart wrote for his clarinettist friend and fellow Freemason Anton Stadler: the "Kegelstatt" Trio (for clarinet, viola, and piano), the Clarinet Quintet, and the Clarinet Concerto (with the society's membership expanded considerably for the last). (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Sept. 15 at 8.)

Kathleen Supové—This avant-garde musician's "The Exploding Piano" events enter a new season with a program that comprises performances of Frederic Rzewski's "Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues," John Adams's "Phrygian Gates," and pieces by Randall Woolf, Aaron Jay Kernis, and Alvin Curran, with unpredictable theatrical bits inserted along the way. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. between Church St. and Broadway. 226-0051. Sept. 15 and Sept. 20-22 at 8.)

Lorenz Maycher—The organist offers a forty-minute lunchtime recital including pieces by Leo Sowerby, Franck, and Bach. (St. Francis of Assisi Church, 135 W. 31st St. Sept. 16 at 1:15. No tickets necessary.)

Bargemusic—Presenting Saint-Saëns's Fantasie for Violin and Harp; Debussy's Trio for Flute, Viola, and Harp; and Ginastera's rarely performed "Cantos de Tucumán," with mezzo-soprano Janice Felty, percussionist Daniel Druckman, and a mixed instrumental quartet. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. Sept. 16 at 7:30 and Sept. 19 at 4.)

"Jazz Concertante"—A program of jazz-inspired works by John Adams (his Chamber Symphony), Daniel Schnyder (the première of his Concerto for Bass Trombone, featuring Dave Taylor), Gershwin (Mr. Schnyder's arrangement of his "I've Got Rhythm" Variations), and Lepo Sumera. Several jazz musicians assist the Absolute Ensemble, conducted by Kristjan Järvi. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Sept. 16 at 8.)

Karen Bogardus—Flutist, with pianist Karen Beluso, performing works by Michel Blavet, Roussel, and Schubert. (Church for All Nations, 417 W. 57th St. Sept. 17 at 7:30. Admission by contribution.)

Vector Five—This new modern-music series opens with a concert of chamber works by Charles Coleman, Charles Griffin, Christopher Auerbach-Brown, Yuri Bortz, and Stefania de Kennessey (the première of her "High Summer," performed by soprano Melissa Marshall and the Meridian String Quartet). (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 18 at 2.)

Christopher Taylor—The pianist performs "Turning," a recent theme-and-variations set written for him by Derek Bermel, who will be present for this concert-discussion. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. Sept. 18 at 9. Admission by contribution.)

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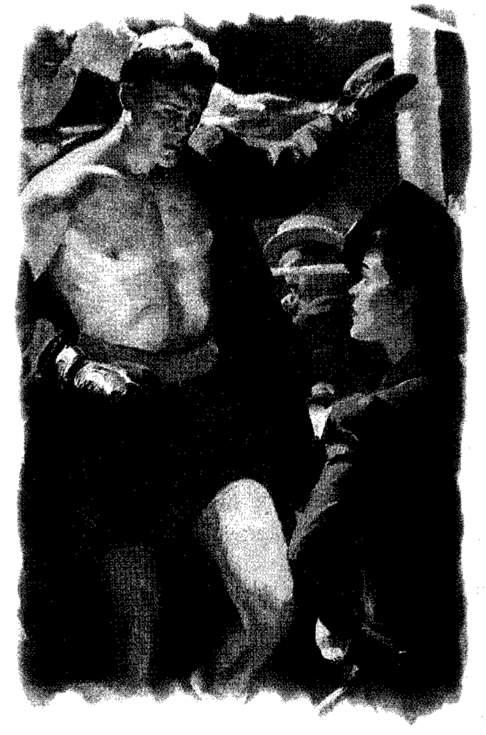

Nineteen fights, almost that many millions of dollars earned, and Oscar De La Hoya was becoming a giant in boxing—a Latino Lancelot dressed in Italian suits and $400 shoes, a bright and shallow knight riding amid a field of villains.

How big was he? He had already carried two major pay-per-view cards, the fights against Ruelas and Hernandez, and combined the two shows grossed more than $20 million—serious cash even in the big-money world of boxing. Here was a commodity more bankable than Roberto Duran ever had been, more fiscally reliable than Roy Jones Jr. or Pernell Whitaker—De La Hoya's two contenders for the mythical crown of best pound-for-pound fighter in the world—more bankable than anybody not in the heavyweight division. And more bankable than all but a handful in that division, too.

He was twenty-two years old. He was handsome. And he did more to protect his image in the U.S. marketplace than any fighter since Sugar Ray Leonard. He did the commercials. He smiled at the corporate outings. And he knew how to earn brownie points. Once, when he was filming an interview with several Caesars executives nearby, De La Hoya halted the questioning and quickly put on a Caesars T-shirt, to the great satisfaction of his benefactors.

"He has a knowledge of the bigger picture and what's going on and saying the right thing," said Caesars sports chief Rich Rose. "All in all, he is the most astute since Ray, and is as good as any athlete I've had the opportunity to work with since Ray."

To read more of this excerpt and to learn about upcoming boxing events, visit **www.hbo.com/boxing**.

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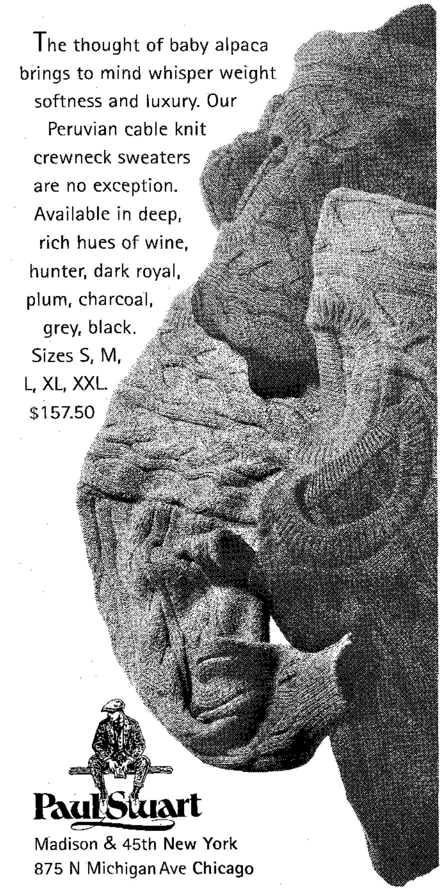
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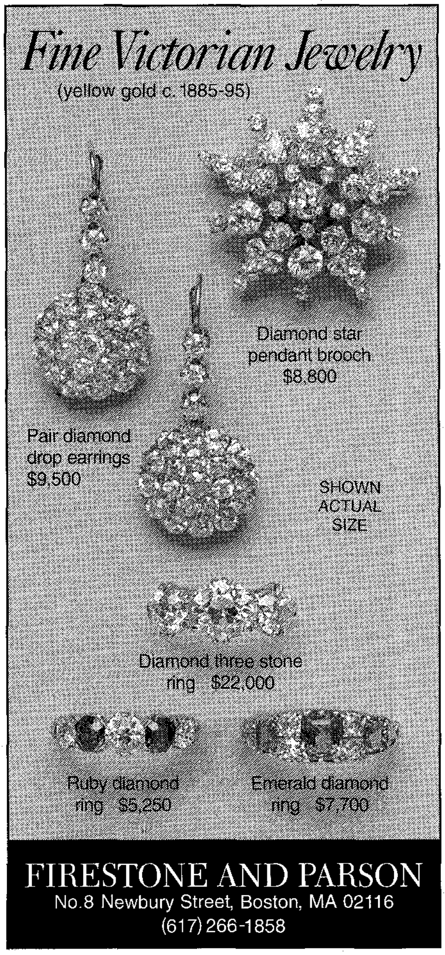
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Kent Tritle—The organist's recital includes Mendelssohn's A-Major Sonata and Preludes and Fugues by Bach (in C Major, BWV 547), Liszt (based on a musical encryption of the letters B-A-C-H), and Duruflé (on a theme derived from the name A-L-A-I-N). (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 288-3588. Sept. 19 at 4.)

Gabriele Fontana and Peter Weber—The soprano and the baritone, Austrians both, perform a program of lieder by Mozart, Schubert, Brahms, Mahler, and others. Pianist Ronald Schneider assists. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. Sept. 21 at 8. For information about free tickets, which should be reserved in advance, call 759-5165.)

"Piano Century"—This season, student pianists from the Juilliard School will be presenting a series of eleven free concerts that survey piano masterpieces of the twentieth century. The opening installment focusses on works from the century's opening decade, by Ravel (his "Jeux d'Eau"), Albéniz, Janáček (his Sonata "1. X. 1905"), Berg (his Piano Sonata), Debussy, Joplin, and Ives (his Sonata No. 1). (Paul Hall, Juilliard School, 60 Lincoln Center Plaza. Sept. 21 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Four Nations Ensemble—The period-instrument group plays Bach's Concertos in E Major for Violin and in F Major for Harpsichord, Two Recorders, and Strings (the alternate version of the Fourth "Brandenburg" Concerto), as well as chamber works by Vivaldi, Handel, and Georg Muffat. (Friends Meeting House, 15 Rutherford Pl., between Second and Third Aves. Sept. 21 at 8. For information about tickets, call 718-622-3695.)

Fritz Gearhart and John Owings—In an evening crafted to tickle the fancy of Francophiles, the violinist and the pianist offer sonatas by Robert Casedesus, Debussy, and Fauré (in A Major), in addition to Milhaud's "Le Printemps." (Weill Recital Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 21 at 8.)

Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio—Violinist Leila Josefowicz, violist Michael Tree, and pianist Joan Tower assist the piano trio (in various combinations) in a recital that comprises Haydn's Piano Trio in A Major (Hob. XV:18), Ms. Tower's "Très Lent" (for cello and piano), Moritz Moszkowski's Suite in G Minor (Op. 71, for two violins and piano), and Dvořák's A-Major Piano Quintet (Op. 81). (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Sept. 21-22 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Readings—Sept. 15 at 7:30: By James St. James, from his account of early-nineties night life, "Disco Bloodbath: A Fabulous True Tale of Murder in Clubland." (Barnes & Noble, Sixth Ave. at 21st St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Sept. 16 at 7: By Daniel Evan Weiss, author of "The Roaches Have No King," from his new novel, "Honk If You Love Aphrodite." (Housing Works Used Book Café, 126 Crosby St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Sept. 21 at 7:30: By Frank McCourt, from "'Tis," his sequel to "Angela's Ashes." (Barnes & Noble, 33 E. 17th St. No tickets necessary.)

Talks—Sept. 16 at 6:30: In conjunction with the Morgan Library's exhibition "The Great Experiment: George Washington and the American Republic," historian John Rhodehamel talks about the nation's first President. (29 E. 36th St. 685-0008, ext. 347.) . . . ¶ Sept. 18 at 2: Following a screening of Donnie Yen's movie "Ballistic Kiss," Lisa Stokes and Michael Hoover discuss their book, "City on Fire: Hong Kong Cinema." John Woo's movie "Bullet in the Head" will be screened at 4. (Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave, at 2nd St. 505-5110.) . . . ¶ Sept. 21 at 6: Writer Peter Quinn interviews novelist Roddy ("Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha") Doyle. (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. For information about tickets, call 930-0571.)

BOOK CURRENTS

From the Pulpit

In America, it can sometimes seem as if the Judeo-Christian tradition has become obsolete, overtaken by more fashionable movements, from New Age pursuits to Tibetan Buddhism. As Fleming Rutledge observes in **The Bible and the New York Times** (Eerdmans),

her collection of sermons woven around current events, "religious tolerance is prized, but on the other hand, actual Christian faith is regarded by the cultural tsars with suspicion, scorn, or outright hostility." But Yahweh gets a reprieve in election years, when politicians spike their speeches with professions of faith in God—fitting, since the word "sermon" comes from the Latin word for speech.

Several new books of sermons provide handy Cliff's Notes for Campaign 2000. **Tongues of Angels, Tongues of Men** (Doubleday) includes not only the Sermon on the Mount and addresses by St. Francis, Martin Luther, and St. John Chrysostom but also poetic visions from John Donne, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Jonathan Swift, as well as homilies by the American ministers Billy Sunday, Billy Graham, and Peter J. Gomes.

American Sermons, a graceful volume from the Library of America, starts with pilgrim days and ends in the civil-rights era. Its first entry is Robert Cushman's avowal at "Plimmoth" in 1621: "Though we be in a Heathen Country, yet the grace of Christ is not quenched in us." Seventy years later, at the height of the Salem witch furor, Cotton Mather was not so sure. He warned a congregation "extraordinarily alarum'd by the Wrath of the Devil," that their souls were under siege. In 1741, Jonathan Edwards went further. In his electrifying "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (collected also in **The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards**; Yale), he raged that God held mankind "over the Pit of Hell, much as one holds a Spider, or some loathsome Insect, over the Fire." Two centuries on, a more hopeful vision prevails. On April 3, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr., told a rapt Memphis audience that humanity's only choice was "nonviolence or nonexistence" and declared, "Only when it is dark enough, can you see the stars."

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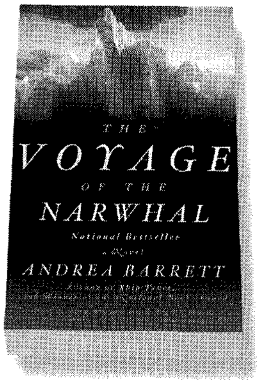
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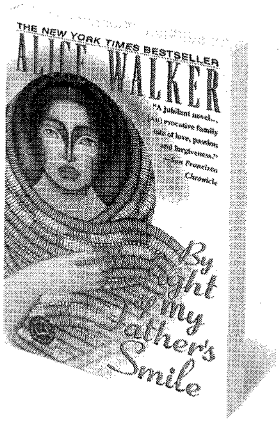
THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
ALICE WALKER
By the Light of my Father's Smile

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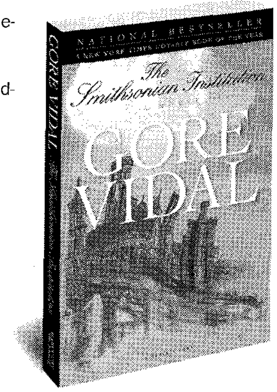
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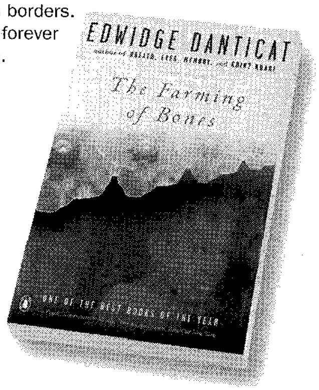
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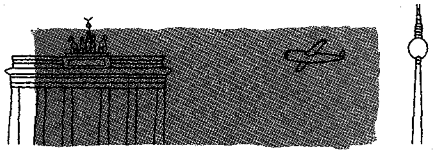
GOINGS ON ABOUT THE GLOBE

A traveller's calendar

BERLIN

Staatsoper Unter den Linden—All eyes in the international music world will be trained on this theatre for the world première of "What Next?," the first opera by the nonagenarian American master Elliott Carter, set to a libretto by Paul Griffiths. Daniel Barenboim conducts it on a double bill with another twentieth-century work that will receive its Berlin première: Schoenberg's twelve-tone opera buffa from 1930, "Von Heute auf Morgen." (Unter den Linden 7. 49-030-20-35-45-55. Four performances, from Sept. 16 through Sept. 25, with two more in March.)

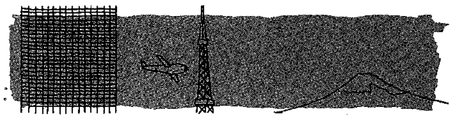
"The Twentieth Century—A Century of Art in Germany"—The state museums have organized Germany's artistic output into such categories as "The Violence of Art" (at the Altes Museum, Museuminsel), "Spirit and Matter" (Neue Nationalgalerie, Potsdamerstrasse, Tiergarten), "Collage and Montage" (Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum for Contemporary Berlin, Invalidenstrasse), "Architecture in Berlin" (Berliner Stadtraum), and "The Legibility of Art" (Kunstbibliothek, Kulturforum Matthäikirchplatz, Tiergarten). Some segments opened Sept. 4; others follow on Sept. 29; all shows run through Jan. 9.



TOKYO

Tokyo International Film Festival—The twelfth annual affair, with screenings of Asian and international films, plus panel discussions with film-industry guests. (Bunkamura Theatre, Shibuya. Oct. 30-Nov. 7. For more information, visit www.tokyo-film-fest.or.jp.)

Blue Note—Equal parts Art Tatum and Count Basie, the pianist **cyrus chestnut** (Oct. 11-16) is a maniacal speed demon, but when he relaxes, his bluesy phrases flow like a woodland stream, and he's untouchable. His trio is joined by the equally vivacious saxophonist **antonio hart.** (6-3-16 Raika Building, Minami-Aoyama, Minato-ku. 81-03-5485-0088.)



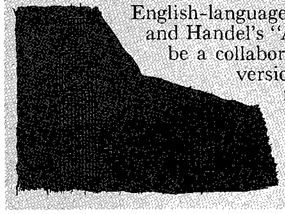
LONDON

Antigone—Declan Donnellan's staging of Sophocles' tragedy, starring Tara Fitzgerald. Previews begin Oct. 1. Opens Oct. 11. (The Old Vic, Waterloo Road, SE1. 44-0171-369-1722.)

The Lady in the Van—Nicholas Hytner directs Dame Maggie Smith, in a new play that Alan Bennett has based on his droll memoir of the bag lady who lived in a camper outside his front door, in the fashionable section of London's Camden Town. Previews begin Nov. 19. Opens Dec. 7. (Queen's Theatre, Shaftesbury Ave., W1V. 44-0171-494-5040.)

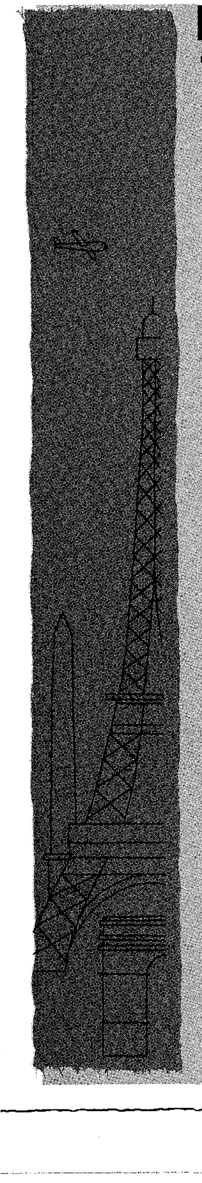
The Mysteries—The Royal National Theatre presents a revival of its 1985 trilogy of medieval English mystery plays ("The Nativity," "The Passion," and "Doomsday"), adapted by Tony Harrison and set in a contemporary working-class environment. Previews begin Dec. 7. Opens Dec. 18. (Royal National Theatre, South Bank, SE1. 44-0171-452-3000.)

Tate Gallery—The museum shows work by the four finalists for the Turner Prize, which is awarded annually to a British artist under fifty for work done in the preceding year. The current crop is strong on video and self-revelation: Tracey Emin's creations (drawings, quilts, sculptures) form a sort of brazen and engaging ongoing memoir; Steve McQueen makes wryly literal videos (in "Drumroll," for instance, he rolls a metal drum through the streets of Manhattan); Steven Pippin turns everyday objects into functioning camera obscuras (a bathtub, a washing machine, a photo booth); and the Wilson twins, Jane and Louise, create ghostly installations out of footage of abandoned government buildings. Opens Oct. 20; through Jan. 23. (Millbank. 44-0171-887-8000. Open daily, 10 to 5:50.)



English National Opera—The E.N.O., renowned for its imaginative, often revisionist, English-language productions, includes new takes on Weber's "Der Freischütz" and Handel's "Alcina" in its fall schedule. The most exciting event, however, may be a collaboration with the Royal National Theatre: Deborah Warner's staged version of Janáček's harrowing song cycle "Diary of One Who Vanished," with tenor Ian Bostridge performing a new English translation by Seamus Heaney. Following runs in Dublin and Paris, it will play in London for four nights only; New Yorkers won't get a chance to see it until Lincoln Center's 2000-01 season. (Lyttelton Theatre, Southbank Centre. Nov. 3-6. 44-0171-452-3000.)

PARIS



Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais—The museum is marking the three-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin with an exhibtion of more than ninety of the painter's oils and pastels. In an era when artists gained their reputation on the strength of vast historical canvases, Chardin commanded attention with sensuous still-lifes and humble domestic scenes. Through Nov. 22. (Champs-Elysées, 3, avenue du Général-Eisenhower. 33-01-44-13-17-30. Open daily, except Tuesdays, 10 to 8, and Wednesday evenings until 10.)

Opéra National de Paris—While the Opéra Bastille dedicates its fall season to ultra-standard repertoire (with the exception of Berg's "Lulu," in November), two potentially exceptional productions grace the company's other hall, the sumptuous Palais Garnier. From France's aristocratic past comes Rameau's *opéra-ballet* of 1735, "Les Indes Galantes" (opening on Sept. 17 and continuing through fourteen performances until Oct. 5), in a new production created by Andrei Serban for William Christie's Les Arts Florissants, who have made a specialty of such spectacles. The end of that regal era is documented in "Dialogues des Carmélites," the always moving 1957 opera by Francis Poulenc (whose centennial is being celebrated this year). Soprano Patricia Racette (as Blanche) and mezzo-soprano Jocelyne Taillon (Mère Jeanne) are among the notables in the cast who will sing in eight performances from Nov. 13 to Nov. 28, the first seven of which are led by Seiji Ozawa. (Place de l'Opéra. 33-01-43-43-96-96.)

Ballet Preljocaj—The choreographer Angelin Preljocaj, who in the past has turned "Romeo and Juliet" into a class struggle and given the Annunciation an erotic tenderness, presents "Personne n'Épouse les Méduses" ("Nobody Marries a Medusa"), an evening-length work about television and stupefaction. (Théâtre de la Ville, 2, place du Châtelet. 33-01-42-74-22-77. Oct. 26-Nov. 6.)

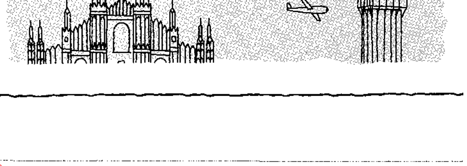
Festival d'Automne à Paris—The annual citywide celebration of theatre, dance, opera, music, and cinema this year includes a Kurosawa retrospective, the multimedia director Robert Lepage's "Zulu Time (Technological Cabaret)," performances by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, and works by Luciano Berio and Wolfgang Rihm. Sept. 21-Dec. 30. (156, rue de Rivoli. 33-01-53-45-17-17.)

Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe—The big horse race, on the long track, in the country that gave the world the pari-mutuel betting system. Oct. 3. (Longchamp, Bois de Boulogne. 33-01-44-30-75-00.)

MILAN

Teatro alla Scala—Among La Scala's lineup of operatic warhorses this fall, a production of Beethoven's "Fidelio" may prove particularly sizzling with the company's music director, Riccardo Muti, conducting. Soprano Waltraud Meier (as Leonore) and tenor Thomas Moser (as Florestan) lead the cast. Try to catch one of the six performances between Dec. 7 and Dec. 22, after which Muti cedes the podium to a second-stringer. . . . ¶ La Scala's Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus offer three concert performances (Oct. 24-25 and Oct. 27) of Debussy's rarely performed "Le Martyre de Saint-Sébastien," a cantata on a mystical text by Gabriele d'Annunzio. With Georges Prêtre, the eloquent dean of French conductors, on the podium. (Via Filodrammatici 2. 39-02-7200-3744.)

Teatro Smeraldo—The smart, seductive, and eclectic jazz diva **cassandra wilson** performs on Sept. 15. Wilson is endowed with a voice like molten honey and a mesmerizing stage presence. (Piazza XXV Aprile. 39-02-2900-6767.)



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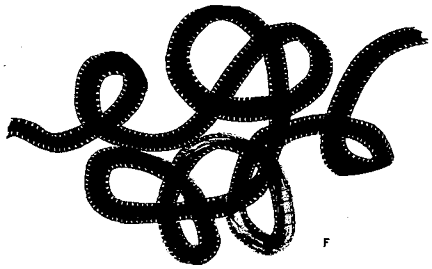


OPENING

American Beauty—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Sept. 15. (Beekman, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

Blue Streak—A comedy about a jewel thief (Martin Lawrence) who impersonates a Los Angeles detective in order to retrieve stolen jewels from a police station. Directed by Les Mayfield. Opening Sept. 17.

Breakfast of Champions—A black comedy, based on Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.,'s novel, with Bruce Willis, Albert Finney, and Nick Nolte. Directed by Alan Rudolph, who also wrote the screenplay. Opening Sept. 17.

For Love of the Game—A romantic drama, directed by Sam Raimi, about a baseball pitcher (Kevin Costner) who's past his prime. Opening Sept. 17.

Get Bruce!—A documentary about Hollywood comedy writer Bruce Vilanch. Directed by Andrew J. Kuehn. Opening Sept. 17. (Chelsea Cinemas.)

Lucie Aubrac—Claude Berri's film (based on a novel by Lucie Aubrac) about the French Resistance movement during the Second World War. With Daniel Auteuil and Carole Bouquet. In French. Opening Sept. 17. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Romance—A Parisian woman (Caroline Ducey) tries to gain control of her life. Written and directed by Catherine Breillat. In French. Opening Sept. 17. (BAM Rose Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, and Quad Cinema.)

Speaking in Strings—Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening Sept. 17.

Sugar Town—Allison Anders and Kurt Voss's story about the Los Angeles music scene. With Jade Gordon, Ally Sheedy, Larry Klein, Rosanna Arquette, John Taylor, and Beverly D'Angelo. Opening Sept. 17. (84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Union Square.)

The Taxman—Two friends (Joe Pantoliano and Wade Dominguez) join forces to investigate the Russian Mob in Brighton Beach. Directed by Avi Nesher. Opening Sept. 17.

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

The Blair Witch Project—A cunningly conceived and crafted exercise in suggestibility and terror. A student film crew goes out into the Maryland woods, attempting to record traces of a predatory witch who has, according to legend, held sway in the area for two hundred years. What we see is presented to us as the remnants of the project after the crew has disappeared. The footage has the haphazard continuity of tormented fragments; it's all handheld stuff, caught on the run. The documentary project is, of course, fiction, created by five film nuts from Orlando, headed by Eduardo Sanchez and Dan Myrick. In black-and-white and color.—*David Denby* (7/26/99) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, and State.)

Bowfinger—Bobby Bowfinger (Steve Martin) is a small-time movie producer in Los Angeles who grabs at one last chance: he decides to make a movie without informing the star—Kit Ramsey (Eddie Murphy), at once the most heavily protected and most uncontrolled actor in Hollywood. It's a great conceit, and it flows naturally into a series of turbid set pieces, as Bowfinger and his fellow-hopefuls (played with a will by Christine Baranski and Heather Graham, among others) lure the hapless Kit into scenes that will (a) cause him to react like an action hero, and (b) drive him crazy. The climax feels a little undernourished, but Martin's comedy (he wrote the script) is so genial, and is directed at such a gallop by Frank Oz, that you can forgive it almost anything.—*Anthony Lane* (8/16/99) (Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

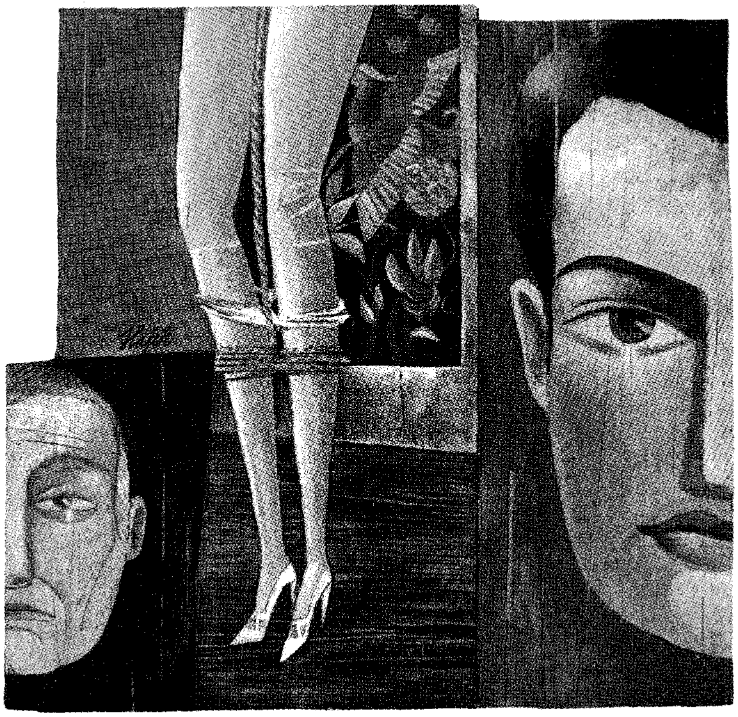
The Muse—The writer-director-actor Albert Brooks, caught in a limbo of his own making. Brooks plays a Hollywood screenwriter who has lost his way and who applies for help from a daughter of Zeus—a Muse (Sharon Stone) who supplies lucrative suggestions to established writers and directors. The Muse, however, turns out to be a demanding and flighty broad who moves in on the screenwriter and displaces him from his own bed, and her suggestions for movies are banal. In this elaborate conceit, there is the potential for a good spoof of Hollywood success, which seems at times to operate by mystique or by chance, but Brooks doesn't find the momentum or bite in the idea. The movie itself lacks inspiration—it's sluggish and old-Hollywoodish in the worst way, and Brooks's character is a sad sack whose self-pity becomes repellent. There are some sharp scenes about Hollywood ruthlessness, and a few amusing cameos from such luminaries as Martin Scorsese and James Cameron, who apply to the Muse for help. With Andie MacDowell and Jeff Bridges.—*D.D.* (9/13/99) (East 85th Street, Guild, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

My Neighbor Totoro (1988)—It's slight yet sublime: a modern cartoon fairy tale that's delicate and free. To be close to his wife, who's being treated for an unnamed illness in a rural hospital, a genial academic dad moves into a country house with his two small daughters. There the girls meet tiny "dust bunnies"—bright-eyed ebony balls of fur who assume squatters' rights in deserted homes (and leave en masse when the homes become occupied)—and also a string of Totoros, toy-bunny-like creatures who range from tiny to king-size. A giant Totoro, with an ear-shattering roar and the ability to fly on a magic top or leap to the treetops in a single bound, becomes their pal and protector. The animator, Hayao Miyazaki, sustains a mood of gentle startlement that reawakens young and old eyes alike to the vitality of made-up movie imagery. In English.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 19.)

Our Man in Havana (1960)—Though Alec Guinness's name is Wormold and he is the Havana representative of a vacuum-cleaner company, he is the hero. Recruited into the British secret service by dry, hunched Noël Coward (the mandarin as secret agent), Wormold has no idea what is wanted of him. He must send in reports, however; so he fills them with inventions and fantasies. This satirical comedy turns into a nightmarish thriller when his phony reports precipitate actual reprisals and murders. Adapted by Graham Greene, from his novel, the picture is almost too clever and maybe that's why it was a box-office failure, but its naughtiness is terribly funny. The director, Carol Reed, employs the Cuban locations as wittily as he does the cast, which includes Ralph Richardson, Burl Ives, Ernie Kovacs, and Maureen O'Hara. Kovacs wasn't allowed to wear a beard, because of fear that it might offend Castro.—*Pauline Kael* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Sept. 17.)

Outside Providence—This comedy—based on Peter Farrelly's semiautobiographical novel and written by Farrelly, his brother Bobby, and director Michael Corrente ("American Buffalo," "Federal Hill")—embraces all the clichés that "Rushmore" so niftily exploded. The sweet but troubled, wrong-side-of-the-tracks Tim Dunphy (Shawn Hatosy) gets busted and is sent to prep school, where he romances the upper-crusty but tolerant coed Jane Weston (Amy Smart), battles the evil dorm master, Mr. Funderberk (Timothy Crowe), befriends a picked-on nerd called Jizz (Jack Ferver), and learns a lot about life, love, and responsibility. There's also the obligatory face-off with his gruff, disappointed dad—Alec Baldwin, who uses an accent that careens between Rhode Island and Ralph Kramden. The soundtrack never lets you forget that it's 1974.—*Ken Marks* (Cinema II, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

PomPoko ("The Raccoon War," 1994)—One of the most bizarre animated features ever made (even in Japan)—a tragicomic, two-hour epic about raccoons who combat human encroachment on their forest home. The se-



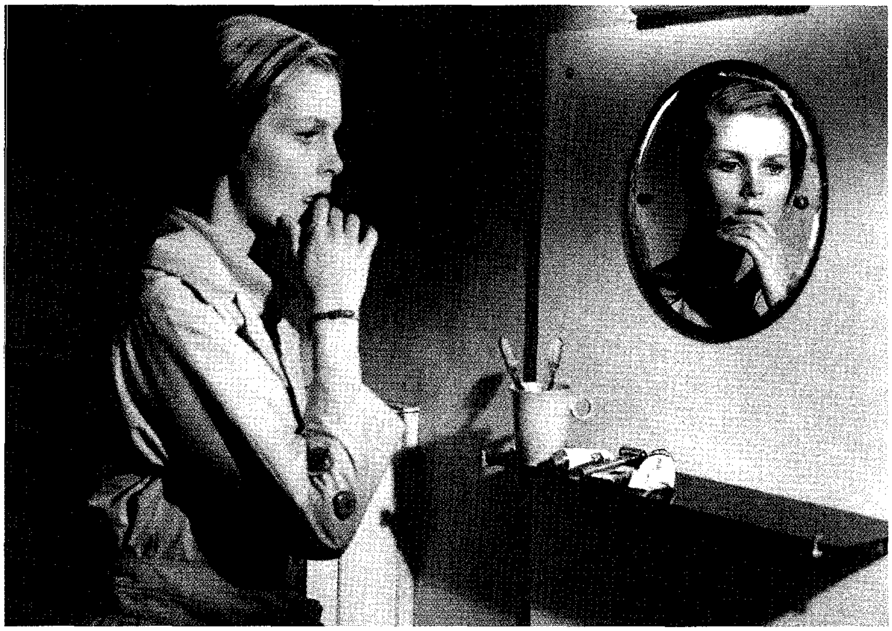
Opening Sept. 17, Catherine Breillat's "Romance."

OLAF HAJEK

new york los angeles boston

kate spade
NEW YORK

ductive, hilarious set pieces center on the raccoons' protective superpower: their ability to shape-shift. Unfortunately, the narrative keeps changing shape, too. One minute it's a parody of samurai movies, the next it's a defense of ecoterrorism, and the next it's a woodland fable. The movie's treatment of radical raccoons who advocate killing people (and do kill several) will confuse both children and adults. Still, it's hard not to admire a cartoon in which female raccoons flaunt nubile charms, and old male raccoons do magical things with their genitalia. Directed by Isao Takahata. In Japanese.—*M.S.* (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 18.)



At BAM *Rose Cinemas, Carol Lynley in "Bunny Lake Is Missing."*

PHOTOFEST

Runaway Bride—A rumpled and eccentric romantic comedy with a fluctuating pulse and more odd corners than a rural junk shop. Julia Roberts is a bolter—a girl unsure of her identity, who keeps running away from men at the altar—and Richard Gere, who has developed a new, becomingly wistful manner, is a sardonic New York newspaper columnist who shows up in Roberts's small Maryland town to turn her story into news. The two are drawn together by self-dissatisfaction and bafflement. Garry Marshall, who directed, takes his time exploring the town, and the movie that results is poky but often charming.—*D.D.* (8/9/99) (Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

A Shot in the Dark (1964)—The Inspector Clouseau series peaked early with this homicidal farce, which came right after the soft-boiled detective débuted in "The Pink Panther." Peter Sellers keeps hitting on inspired ways to spark Clouseau's comic fatuity, while the director, Blake Edwards, creates running visual jokes that gambol, gamble, and pay off. Sellers' slapstick gags are like physical Freudian slips—staring soulfully at a maid named Maria (Elke Sommer), Clouseau sticks a flaming cigarette lighter into his coat pocket. His sham suaveness is uproarious: when Maria worries that he'll catch pneumonia, Clouseau muses, "I probably will, but it's all part of life's rich pageant."—*M.S.* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Sept. 18.)

The Sixth Sense—A delicate, emotionally attentive, but very scary ghost story. In a Philadelphia drained of color and life, a shrink (Bruce Willis) who specializes in childhood anxieties becomes obsessed with one of his patients, a suffering nine-year-old boy (Haley Joel Osment) who "sees" dead people. The movie, written and directed by the young, Indian-born M. Night Shyamalan, consists mostly of long conversations between Willis, who is usually silent and very patient, and Osment, who may be an acting genius. Despite an occasional hackneyed moment, the movie is an admirable attempt at injecting some honest feeling into a curdled commercial genre, and it pays off in the end with a genuine shock that leaves one amazed.—*D.D.* (8/23-30/99) (Cinema I, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

Speaking in Strings—Seconds into Paola di Florio's bio-documentary about the violinist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, one learns that the pivotal event in the musician's life was a failed suicide attempt. This essentially ensures that the viewer will approach Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg's tale in a spirit of sympathy—a clever manipulation, given her reputation as one of the most brash, egotistical, and overwrought musicians currently treading the concert stage. One sees here a "from the gut," instinctual musician whose blue-collar sensibilities mesh precariously with a black-tie profession: imagine Rosie O'Donnell playing the Sibelius Concerto. And yet, whether one likes her music-making or not, she emerges from this film as sincere in her artistry, if tortured by her demons. One of these, the film suggests, may be her sexuality. Though this should be of no more than passing interest, Ms. di Florio repeatedly flirts with the question of lesbianism without providing the answer. In the end, the frequent references to "really strong women" and the violinist's "makeshift family" come across as annoyingly coy in what is otherwise an engaging portrait.—*James M. Keller* (Cinema Village; starting Sept. 17.)

Stop Making Sense (1984)—Directed by Jonathan Demme, this concert film by the New York rock band Talking Heads is a continuous rock experience that keeps building, becoming ever more intense and euphoric. It's a happy movie from beginning to end. The lead singer, David Byrne, is a stupefying performer who gave the group its modernism—the undertone of repressed hysteria, which he somehow blended with freshness and adventurousness and a driving beat. He designed the stage lighting and the elegantly plain performance-art environment (three scenes used for backlit slide projections); there's no glitter, no sleaze. The sound seems better than live sound; it *is* better—it has been filtered and mixed and fussed over, so that it achieves ideal clarity.—*P.K.* (Film Forum 2; Sept. 15-21.)

The Thomas Crown Affair—A spirited, entertaining remake of the profoundly unimportant 1968 movie that starred Steve McQueen and Faye Dunaway. In this version, Pierce Brosnan is the bored, man-who-has-everything plutocrat Thomas Crown, who makes off with a famous painting from the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Rene Russo is the insurance investigator who falls in love with him when she's supposed to be turning him over to the police. The movie is expert piffle for grownups, directed with great energy by John McTiernan.—*D.D.* (8/9/99) (Chelsea West, Criterion Center, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Union Square, and Waverly.)

West Beirut—The Lebanese director Ziad Doueiri left his native Beirut at the age of twenty, came to America, wound up as a cameraman on Quentin Tarantino pictures, and has now returned to his home town to make his first feature. The best début movies have a quality all their own—a kind of breathless, jolting ebullience, suggesting that young filmmakers would burst if they didn't get to tell their stories. Doueiri is one such enthusiast; his movie has its rough patches and, toward the end, its slightly damp longueurs, but it nails a time and a place so firmly that, when it ends, you feel bereft. Based largely on Doueiri's own teen-age years, it stars his brother Rami as Tarek, a Beirut schoolboy with a sly smile. Tarek lives with his parents, Hala (Carmen Lebbos) and Riad (Joseph Bou Nassar), in the Muslim area of East Beirut; the tale begins in April, 1975, when sectarian rivalries split the city in two. Suddenly, Tarek and his friend Omar (Mohamad Chamas) are unable to attend school in the Eastern sector; the simple act of getting film developed involves a mortal risk. There are extraordinary scenes here as moments of light comedy flip casually into the treacherous, and vice versa; if you want solid political history, the film is no more than an infuriating sketch, but as an exercise in the unpredictable it shows both nerve and charm. Weirder still, the whole thing has a tang of the familiar; even boys in Beirut, it seems, stuck Bruce Lee posters on their bedroom walls. In Arabic.—*A.L.* (9/6/99) (Village East Cinemas. . . . ¶ Eastside Playhouse; through Sept. 16.)

ALSO PLAYING

AMERICAN PIE (reviewed in our issue of 7/12/99): Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square. . . . **THE ASTRONAUT'S WIFE:** Cinema 3rd Avenue, Criterion Center, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **AUTUMN TALE:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **BEDROOMS AND HALLWAYS:** Cinema Village. . . . **BEST LAID PLANS:** First & 62nd Cinemas. . . . **BETTER THAN CHOCOLATE:** Chelsea Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **BLACK CAT, WHITE CAT:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **B. MONKEY:** Angelika Film Center and Gotham Cinema. . . . **BUENA VISTA SOCIAL CLUB:** Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **CHILL FACTOR:** Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, State, and Union Square. . . . **THE DINNER GAME:** Paris. . . . **DUDLEY DO-RIGHT:** Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **EARTH:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **EYES WIDE SHUT** (7/26/99): Kips Bay Theatre, New York Twin, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **LA GRANDE ILLUSION** (1937): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **ILLUMINATA:** Union Square. . . . **IN TOO DEEP:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **I WOKE UP EARLY THE DAY I DIED:** The Screening Room. . . . **LIFE IS BEAU-**

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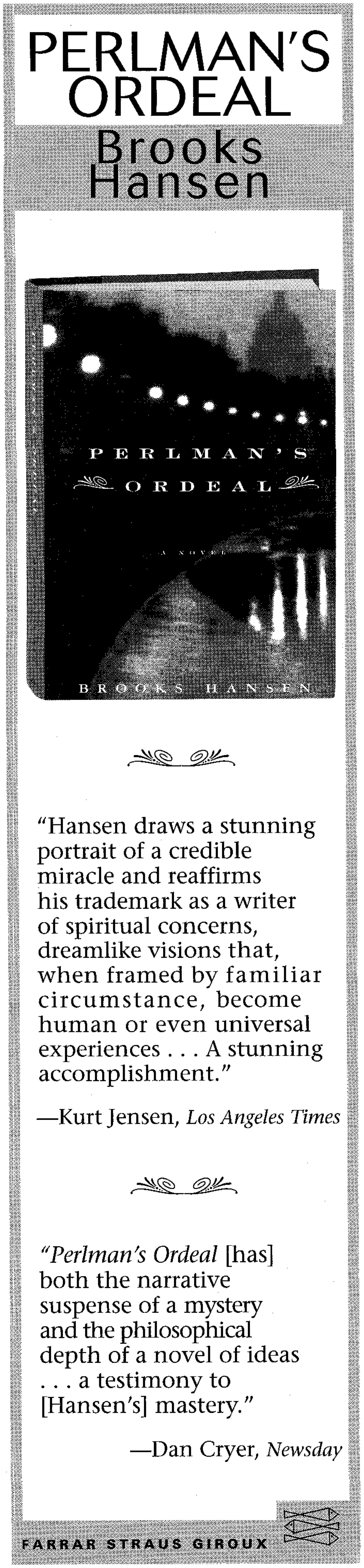

PERLMAN'S ORDEAL

Brooks Hansen

"Hansen draws a stunning portrait of a credible miracle and reaffirms his trademark as a writer of spiritual concerns, dreamlike visions that, when framed by familiar circumstance, become human or even universal experiences . . . A stunning accomplishment."

—Kurt Jensen, *Los Angeles Times*

"*Perlman's Ordeal* [has] both the narrative suspense of a mystery and the philosophical depth of a novel of ideas . . . a testimony to [Hansen's] mastery."

—Dan Cryer, *Newsday*

FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX

TIFUL (11/16/98 & 3/15/99; in English): Lincoln Square and Union Square. . . . **LOVE STINKS:** Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Waverly. . . . **LUCINDA'S SPELL:** Village East Cinemas. . . . **MARCELLO MASTROIANNI: I REMEMBER** (1997): Cinema Village. . . . **MICKEY BLUE EYES:** Chelsea Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE RED VIOLIN** (6/14/99): BAM Rose Cinemas, 59th Street East Cinema, and 62nd & Broadway. . . . **RUN LOLA RUN:** Angelika Film Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Park & 86th Street Cinemas. . . . **THE SOURCE:** Film Forum. . . . **STAR WARS: EPISODE I—THE PHANTOM MENACE** (5/24/99): Union Square and Ziegfeld. . . . **STIGMATA:** Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia, Orpheum VII, and Waverly. . . . **STIFF UPPER LIPS:** First & 62nd Cinemas and Village East Cinemas. . . . **STIR OF ECHOES:** Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, and Union Square. . . . **THE 13TH WARRIOR:** Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, State, Sutton, and Union Square. . . . **TRICK:** BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Metro Cinema, and Waverly. . . . **WELCOME BACK, MR. MCDONALD:** Film Forum.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

FILM FORUM 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Sept. 15-21: "Stop Making Sense" (†).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of animated films made by Studio Ghibli, Japan. Sept. 15 at 2:30 and Sept. 20 at 6: "Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind" (1984, Hayao Miyazaki; in Japanese). . . . Sept. 17 at 2:30 and Sept. 19 at 5: "Porco Rosso" (1992, Miyazaki; in Japanese). . . . Sept. 17 at 6 and Sept. 19 at 2:30: "Grave of the Fireflies" (1988, Isao Takahata). . . . Sept. 17 at 8 and Sept. 21 at 2:30: "Only Yesterday" (1991, Takahata; in Japanese). . . . Sept. 18 at noon: "Kiki's Delivery Service" (1989, Miyazaki; in Japanese). . . . Sept. 18 at 2:30: "Castle in the Sky" (1986, Miyazaki; in Japanese). . . . Sept. 18 at 5: "Pom-Poko" (†). . . . Sept. 19 at noon: "My Neighbor Totoro" (†). . . . Sept. 20 at 2:30 and Sept. 21 at 5: "Whisper of the Heart" (1995, Yoshifumi Kondo; in Japanese). . . . ¶ A program of films directed by Benjamin Christensen. Sept. 17 at 3 and Sept. 21 at 6: "Witchcraft Through the Ages" (1922; silent, with English voice-over). . . . Sept. 18 at 2:30: "The Night of Revenge" (1915; silent, with English intertitles). . . . Sept. 18 at 5: "Mikaël" (1924; silent, with German intertitles and English voice-over). . . . Sept. 19 at 2:30: "Sealed Orders" (1913; silent, with Danish intertitles and English voice-over). . . . Sept. 19 at 5: "His Wife, the Unknown" (1923; silent, with German intertitles and English voice-over). . . . Sept. 20 at 6: "Children of Divorce" (1939; in Danish). . . . ¶ Sept. 17 at 6 and 8 and Sept. 18 at noon: A program of more than a hundred 1998 award-winning British television and cinema commercials.

WALTER READE THEATRE, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of recent Danish films; in Danish, with English subtitles. Sept. 15 at 1 and 5:45: "Let's Get Lost" (Jonas Elmer). . . . Sept. 15 at 3:15 and 8 and Sept. 16 at 1: "The Magnetist's Fifth Winter" (Morten Henriksen). . . . Sept. 16 at 3:15 and Sept. 19 at 6:15: "Barbara" (Nils Malmros). . . . Sept. 17 at 1 and 6:15 and Sept. 18 at 8:30: "Heart of Light" (Jacob Grønlykke). . . . Sept. 17 at 3:30 and 9 and Sept. 19 at 9: "The Celebration" (Thomas Vinterberg). . . . Sept. 18 at 6:15 and Sept. 19 at 4: "The Humiliated" (Jesper Jargil). . . . ¶ Sept. 18-19 at 2: "Microcosmos" (1996, Claude Nuridsany and Marie Perennou). . . . ¶ Sept. 20 at 7: "The Saragossa Manuscript" (1964, Wojciech Has; in Polish).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—Sept. 15: "Lamerica" (1995, Gianni Amelio; in Italian). . . . Sept. 16: "Belle de Jour" (1967, Luis Buñuel; in French). . . . Sept. 17: "Our Man in Havana" (†). . . . Sept. 18: "Bunny Lake Is Missing" (1965, Otto Preminger). . . . Sept. 19: "Christmas in July" (1940, Preston Sturges). . . . Sept. 20: "Ivan the Terrible, Part I" (1944, Sergei Eisenstein; in Russian). . . . Sept. 21: "Blue" (1993, Krzysztof Kieślowski; in French).

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of Blake Edwards films. Sept. 18 at 2: "A Shot in the Dark" (†). . . . Sept. 18 at 4: "Operation Petticoat" (1959). . . . Sept. 19 at 2: "What Did You Do in the War, Daddy?" (1966). . . . Sept. 19 at 4:30: "The Party" (1968).

A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Sept. 19 at 7, the feature will be "The Naked Kiss" (1964, Samuel Fuller).

MUSEUM OF TELEVISION AND RADIO, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—A program of television shows starring Noël Coward. From Sept. 17: "Ford Star Jubilee: Together with Music" (1955), with Coward and Mary Martin. (Tuesdays through Sundays at 2:30.)

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

ANGELIKA FILM CENTER, 18 W. Houston St.
ART GREENWICH TWIN, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM ROSE CINEMAS, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
BEEKMAN, Second Ave. at 66th St.
CHELSEA CINEMAS, 260 W. 23rd St.
CHELSEA WEST, 333 W. 23rd St.
CINEMA I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA 3RD AVENUE, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA VILLAGE, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
CORONET CINEMAS, Third Ave. at 59th St.
CRITERION CENTER, Broadway at 44th St.
EAST 85TH STREET, First Ave. at 85th St.
EAST 86TH STREET CINEMAS, Third Ave. at 86th St.
EASTSIDE PLAYHOUSE, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84TH STREET SIXPLEX, Broadway at 84th St.
59TH STREET EAST CINEMA, 239 E. 59th St.
FILM FORUM, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
FIRST & 62ND CINEMAS, 400 E. 62nd St.
GOTHAM CINEMA, Third Ave. at 58th St.
GUILD, 33 W. 50th St.
KIPS BAY THEATRE, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS, Broadway at 63rd St.
LINCOLN SQUARE, Broadway at 68th St.
METRO CINEMA I AND 2, Broadway at 99th St.
MURRAY HILL CINEMAS, 160 E. 34th St.
NEW YORK TWIN, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19TH STREET EAST 6, Broadway at 19th St.
OLYMPIA I AND II, Broadway at 107th St.
ORPHEUM VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
PARIS, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
PARK & 86TH STREET CINEMAS, 125 E. 86th St.
QUAD CINEMA, 34 W. 13th St.
THE SCREENING ROOM, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72ND STREET EAST, Third Ave. at 71st St.
62ND & BROADWAY, 62 W. 62nd St.
64TH AND 2ND, Second Ave. at 64th St.
STATE, Broadway at 45th St.
SUTTON I AND 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
UNION SQUARE, Broadway at 13th St.
VILLAGE EAST CINEMAS, Second Ave. at 12th St.
VILLAGE THEATRE VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
WAVERLY I AND 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
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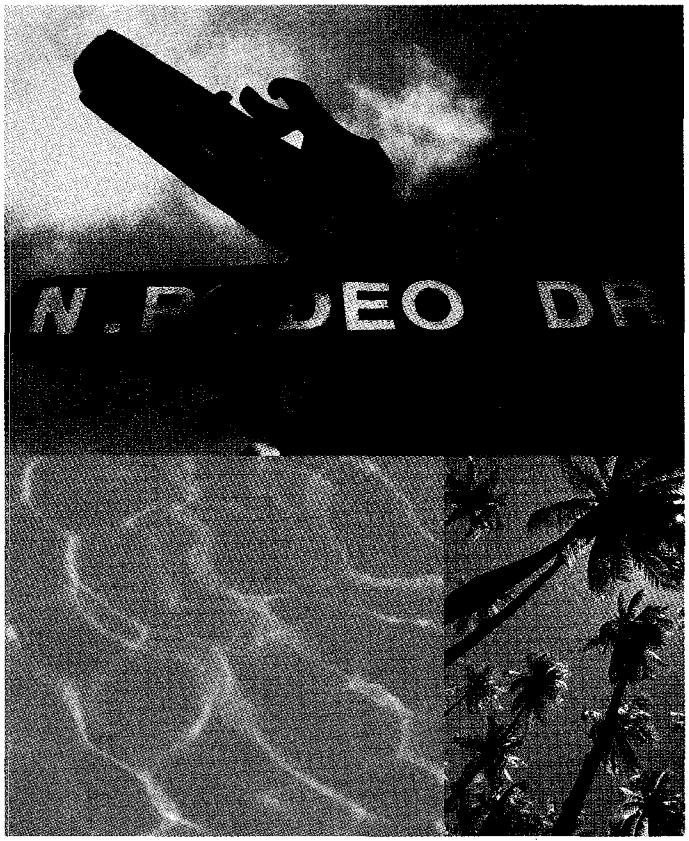
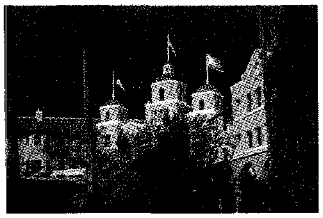
Beverly Hills



Heavenly Beverly, where the stars are out all day and night, and being pampered is a way of life. The city started when the movies did, thanks to the King and Queen of Hollywood, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, who chose Beverly Hills as the site of their famous home, "Villa Pickfair." So many followed suit that the city, a fairy-tale like oasis of charming facades, balconies, and fantastically landscaped parks and streets, soon became a movie-star mecca ... home of the world's most celebrated hotels ... and a paradise where you, too, are invited to bask in the good life.

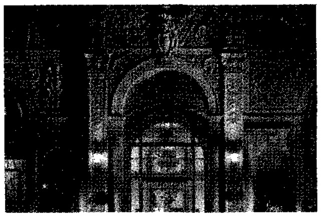
1906 ★ Development of Beverly Hills begins under the guidance of Burton E. Green.

1912 ★ The Beverly Hills Hotel opens. Also known as "The Grand Pink Palace," this Five-Star hotel has been home to royalty and stars of every era, from Marilyn Monroe to Gwyneth Paltrow. The lush grounds, legendary pools and sumptuous suites of The Beverly Hills Hotel set the stage for numerous directors, from Harold Lloyd to Warren Beatty to frequent guest Neil Simon, who shot *California Suite* here in 1978. For more information call (310) 276-2251 or (800) 283-8885.



1923 ★ Beverly Hills' oldest church, The Church of the Good Shepherd, is built—becoming the wedding chapel of choice for such stars as Elizabeth Taylor, Alfred Hitchcock and Gary Cooper.

1928 ★ The Regent Beverly Wilshire opens. This exclusive hotel, an Italian Renaissance and Beaux Arts structure perfectly located on the corner of Rodeo Drive and Wilshire Boulevard, is visited by kings and queens, celebrities and dignitaries. Relaxing beside the Riviera-style pool and indulging in a massage at The Spa soon became the ultimate pastime for jet-setters and stars. For more information call (310) 275-5200, (800) 421-4354 (within California) or (800) 427-4354 (outside California).



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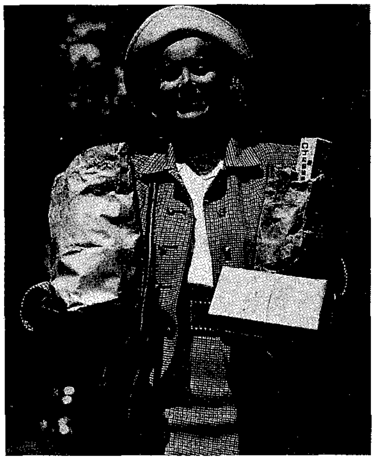
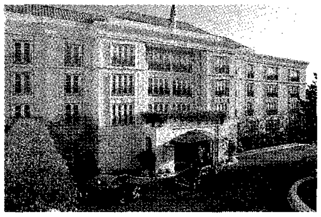


1933 ★ David Orgell, one of the first businesses on Rodeo Drive, opens and still stands today. For shopping galore, no other city can top this world-famous boulevard and its glamorous line-up of designer stores, including Gucci, Giorgio Armani, Tiffany & Co., Cartier and specialty shops brimming with one-of-a-kind treasures.

1955 ★ **The Beverly Hilton** is built. Located in the heart of Beverly Hills, Merv Griffin's sleekly glamorous Four-Star, Four-Diamond hotel becomes the yearly host of the Golden Globes and a favorite with seasoned travelers. They flock to its state-of-the-art conveniences, the largest tiled pool in Southern California and proximity to some of the world's greatest shopping. For information call (800) HILTONS or (310) 274-7777.

1981 ★ Fred Hayman launches the quintessential Beverly Hills' fragrance *Giorgio Beverly Hills*.

1989 ★ Julia Roberts turns heads and melts hearts filming *Pretty Woman* in Beverly Hills.



1991 ★ **The Peninsula Beverly Hills** is built by a local family, the Zarnegins. Today, the Peninsula Beverly Hills is the only Mobil Five-Star and AAA Five-Diamond hotel in Southern California. Features include 196 guestrooms with 16 private villas and 32 suites. Classic elegance, cutting-edge services, a phenomenal Spa and a Five-Diamond restaurant have made this the ultimate celebrity hideaway for stars such as Sylvester Stallone and Glenn Close. For more information call (310) 551-2888 or (800) 462-7899.

1998 ★ **L'Ermitage Beverly Hills**, where less is more, reopens after an extensive renovation. Its gem-like modern setting is the backdrop for a new and modern benchmark of luxury service, making it a favorite spot for stars in the spotlight, who use its city-viewing pool deck and private garden suites for interviews and press affairs. A focus on style has made L'Ermitage Beverly Hills one of the city's fastest-growing hits. For more information call (310) 278-3344 or (800) 800-2113.

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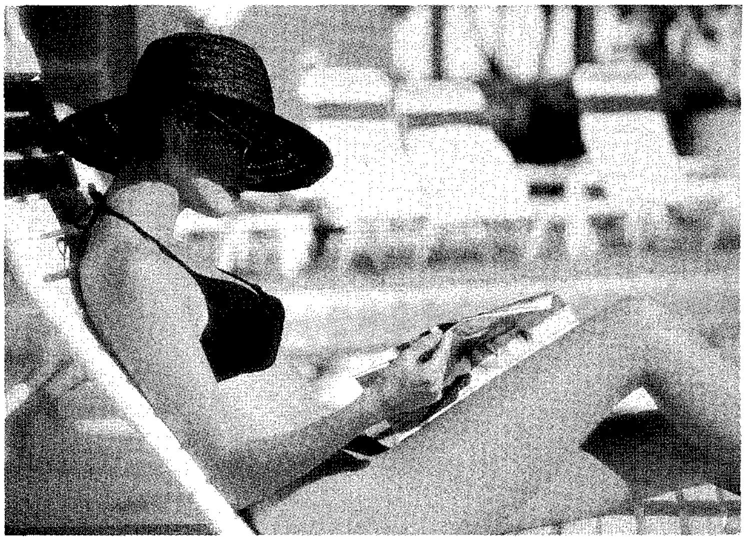

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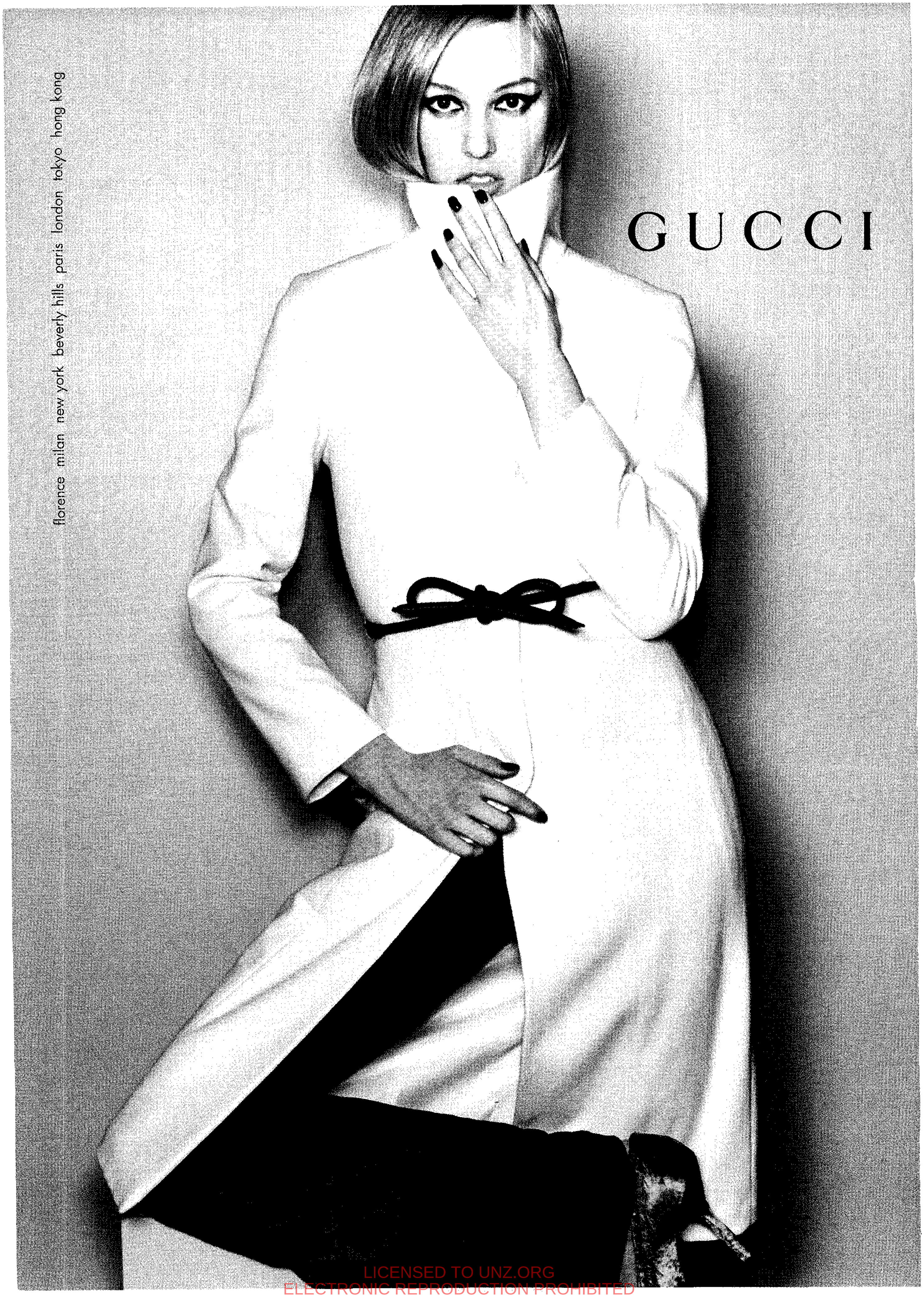
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THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

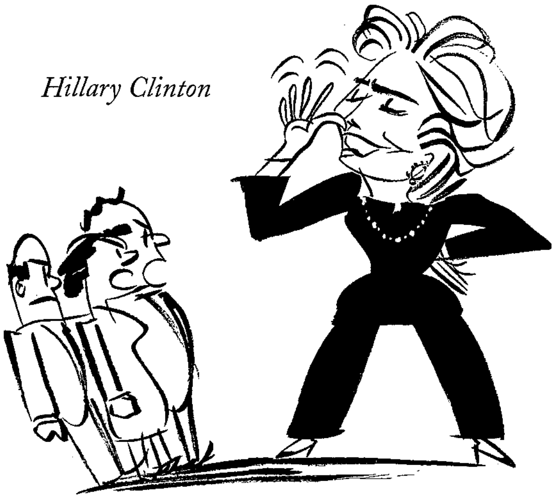
COMMENT

The lost rule of ethnic politics.

On May 2, 1980, Joseph Patrick Thomas Doherty, along with three other I.R.A. gunmen, ambushed a group of British soldiers on a street in Belfast. In the brief firefight that followed, one of the gunmen—it is unclear who—shot and killed a British officer. All four were charged with the murder, and the following year, while they were on trial, Doherty escaped from the maximum-security prison where he was being held and fled to the United States. He was working at Clancy's Bar, in midtown Manhattan, when F.B.I. agents arrested him in 1983, and he spent most of the next decade in American prisons, fighting, ultimately unsuccessfully, his deportation back home, where he had been convicted in absentia.

Doherty's supporters argued that he was not a murderer but a hero, and his imprisonment became, in some circles, a symbol of injustice. Few were more vocal on his behalf than members of New York's political establishment. David Dinkins, for example, called Doherty a "political prisoner." Representative Gary Ackerman, of Queens, offered to put up money for his bail. At one point during the controversy, New York City officials went so far as to rename an intersection in lower Manhattan Joseph Doherty Corner.

Nearly twenty years later, it hardly seems to matter which of the many politicians who rallied to Doherty's cause did so in good faith. But what is even more instructive is that it hardly mattered at the time. Ethnic politics, at least as it is practiced in New York, is not about sincerity, or delicacy of feeling, or even plausible dissimulation. John Lindsay, during his first citywide campaign, kept three yarmulkes stashed in his car, while Al D'Amato used to joke openly about the long hours he logged in synagogue, and Ed Koch said he wanted his funeral to be held in St. Patrick's Cathedral. The state's elected officials may talk about the inviolability of Jerusalem or the importance of granting a visa to Gerry Adams, but everyone understands that the real issue is something else: Do you respect the political power of an ethnic group enough to pander to it shamelessly?



Hillary Clinton

In the last couple of weeks, it has been easy to lose sight of this rule. The story of the President's clemency offer to F.A.L.N. members and his wife's subsequent plea that it be revoked was just too compelling as another Clinton family tragicomedy. According to the First Lady's political foes, and her detractors in the press, there were only two ways to explain it. One was that she herself had sought the clemency offer as a way of ingratiating herself with Puerto Rican New Yorkers, only later to decide it was more trouble than it was worth. The other was that Mrs. Clinton's husband had betrayed her again, this time by not even so much as warning her about an action that would, inevitably, bear on her political future. Even those who might have been willing to give the First Lady credit for sticking up for principle had to be given pause by the three weeks it took her to do so.

There was, however, one group who didn't seem to care much about the mysteries of Mrs. Clinton's marriage or her soul. Members of New York's Puerto Rican community immediately jumped past the question of hypocrisy, and indeed the whole matter of clemency, to the issue of raw political power. Several elected officials made it clear that what troubled them most was not Mrs. Clinton's stand so much as her apparent sense that she could afford to ignore them. Representative José Serrano, of the Bronx, announced that he was withdrawing his support from her near-certain Senate candidacy—basically, it seemed, because she hadn't consulted him. Gloria Quinones, an activist and a childhood friend of one of the F.A.L.N. members, told the *Times*, "She thinks that we are politically expendable, insignificant to her campaign. We'll just see about that Hillary."

A number of Jews, meanwhile, seized upon the controversy as a chance to demand an equivalent show of respect. If a bunch of Puerto Rican conspirators could get clemency, surely the First Lady ought to be able to spring one Israeli spy. State Assemblyman Dov Hikind, of Brooklyn, was particularly blunt about what was at issue. "We are pleading with Hillary to impress her husband with the humanitarian aspect of a pardon for Jonathan Pollard," he said. "Hillary has a lot of work to do in our community, and we are watching carefully."

Many have suggested that the clem-

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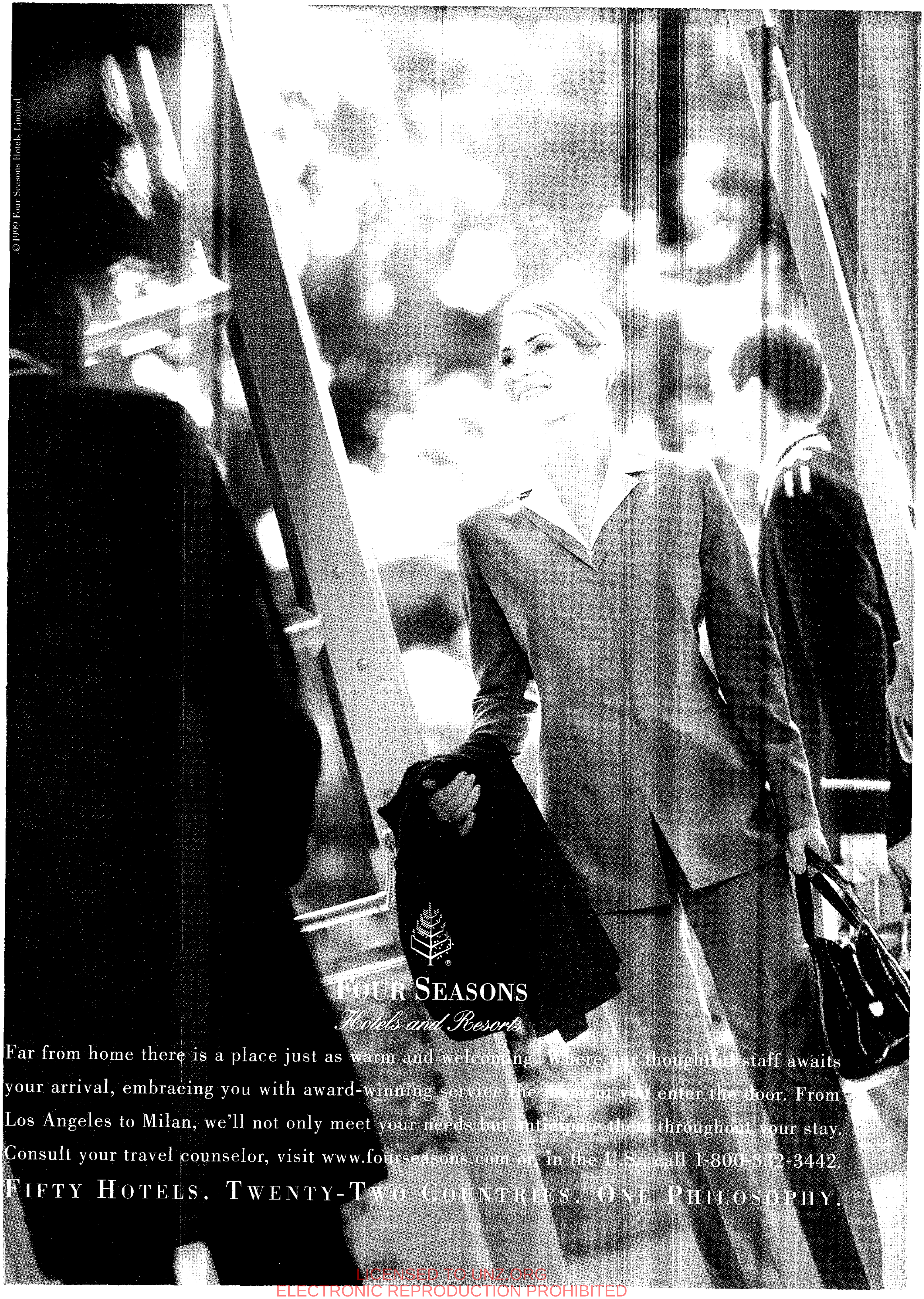

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ency debacle reflects the difficulties an outsider faces in managing the intricacies of a New York campaign. And while certainly there is some truth to this, it would probably be more accurate to reverse things. Ethnic politics is, in the end, comparatively simple; it is the Clintons who have, as usual, supplied the complexity. —ELIZABETH KOLBERT

WALL STREET FOLLIES

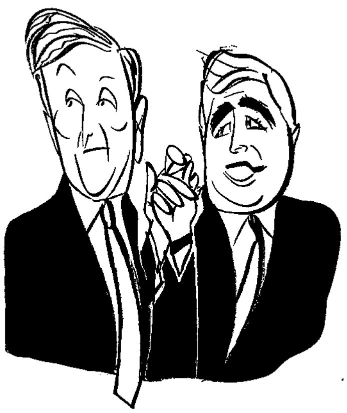
Who loses in the CBS-Viacom merger?

BUSINESS anthropologists who may someday wonder whether the folding of CBS into Viacom succeeded might find a clue in the names Thomas Dooley and Philippe Dauman. Dooley and Dauman are the two Viacom deputy-chairmen who were forced to fall on their swords as a precondition of the merger.

In the corporate game of can-you-top-this, Viacom/CBS, at thirty-seven billion dollars, is the richest media merger ever. Like all mergers, it began with the dreamy talk of salesmen whose vocabulary relies on words like "synergy" and "branding." It then shifted to accountants and lawyers before coming back to the salesmen, who had blunt conversations about what are called "social issues."

Dooley and Dauman, both just over forty, were near the top of CBS president Mel Karmazin's list of "social issues" to take up with Viacom's chairman and C.E.O., Sumner M. Redstone. Dooley and Dauman's role in the future company was, in the words of one Viacom negotiator, "a deal point"—a stumbling block. For Karmazin, who is fifty-six, the foremost social issue was to assert that he would be designated as the successor to Redstone, who is seventy-six. A week before the merger was announced, Redstone told Dooley and Dauman of Karmazin's fear that their continued presence would form a "shadow government" at the new company, undermining his authority. Although Dauman had been Redstone's personal attorney and is an executor of his will, and Dooley had been the executive vice-president for finance and a popular figure at Viacom for two decades—both often shared early dinners with their boss—Redstone signalled that they should leave. "He didn't insist on it," the two men told friends. "Sumner suggested it. We didn't disagree."

Not that anyone should weep for Dooley or Dauman, both of whom will remain on Viacom's board. They are in the second year of five-year contracts that will net them about forty million dollars apiece, says one insider who has seen the contracts, and each has stock options worth about a hundred million dollars. But the fate of Dooley and Dauman suggests Lesson No. 1: As a Viacom strategist put it, "Watergate followed the money. Here you've got to follow the personalities." According to one former Viacom executive, Dooley and Dauman served as an essential "filter" between the hard-edged Redstone and his executives. "They were between Sumner and everyone else," this insider says. "They expedited everything." They patted backs, provided stability, and helped create the corporate family Redstone talks about.



Sumner Redstone and Mel Karmazin

Without such a filter, friction could easily develop between Karmazin and Redstone, who are much alike. "Sumner's so focussed on business," a Viacom negotiator told me. "Mel's like that. I've seen it the past two weeks. Mel was at it all the time. He was relentless. He played Sumner beautifully. 'Sumner, you can be on the magazine covers!' But what I also saw is that Mel's people don't know him. Mel moved without their involvement. His people would say, 'Mel won't like this'—and fifty per cent of the time they were wrong."

Business anthropologists will take note of other pairings that promised harmony: Michael Eisner and Michael Ovitz, of Disney; Steve Ross and Nick Nicholas, of Time Warner; Martin Davis and Stanley Jaffe, of Paramount Communications; Steve Jobs and John Sculley, of Apple. And Karmazin and Michael Jordan, who was C.E.O. of CBS—a partnership embraced by Karmazin in 1996. Within two years, Jordan was gone.

Which leads to Lesson No. 2: Clashing corporate cultures can subvert the grandest plans. Karmazin is a terrific salesman who built a radio empire totally dependent on advertising sales. Viacom, by contrast, is infused with the conceit that its film studio (Paramount) and its cable networks (MTV, VH1, Nickelodeon) are "creative," and also don't depend solely on advertising. For people who think of themselves as "creative," psychic income is often just as important as commissions and dollar goals. All of that may help to explain why, even though Viacom is the acquiring company, many of its executives don't feel victorious. They are afraid of Mel Karmazin—afraid that he will try to fix a company that isn't broken.

On paper, to be sure, Viacom and CBS promise a brilliant mix of complementary assets. In the hasty negotiations between the two companies, according to one who took part, Redstone and Karmazin discussed their dreams for building "the premiere media company on the planet," for creating "the largest recipient of advertising on the planet led by the world's greatest salesman," for establishing "a tremendous syndication powerhouse," for extending their brands and creating synergies between the various divisions of the two companies. They did not, however, discuss how, together, they would make better programming. "No, I don't think that was the driver here," one negotiator said. "Making great television is hard to plan for." Even harder if you don't set this as your goal. —KEN AULETTA

THE PICTURES

The French director of "Romance" gets away with everything.

OVER lunch the other day at the new "W" hotel, Catherine Breillat, the fifty-one-year-old director of "Romance"—the erotic art film, or, depending on your point of view, classy porn flick, that's opening next week—was explaining how she got her latest project past the French censors. "The *image*," she told them, "never exists in and of itself; it exists only

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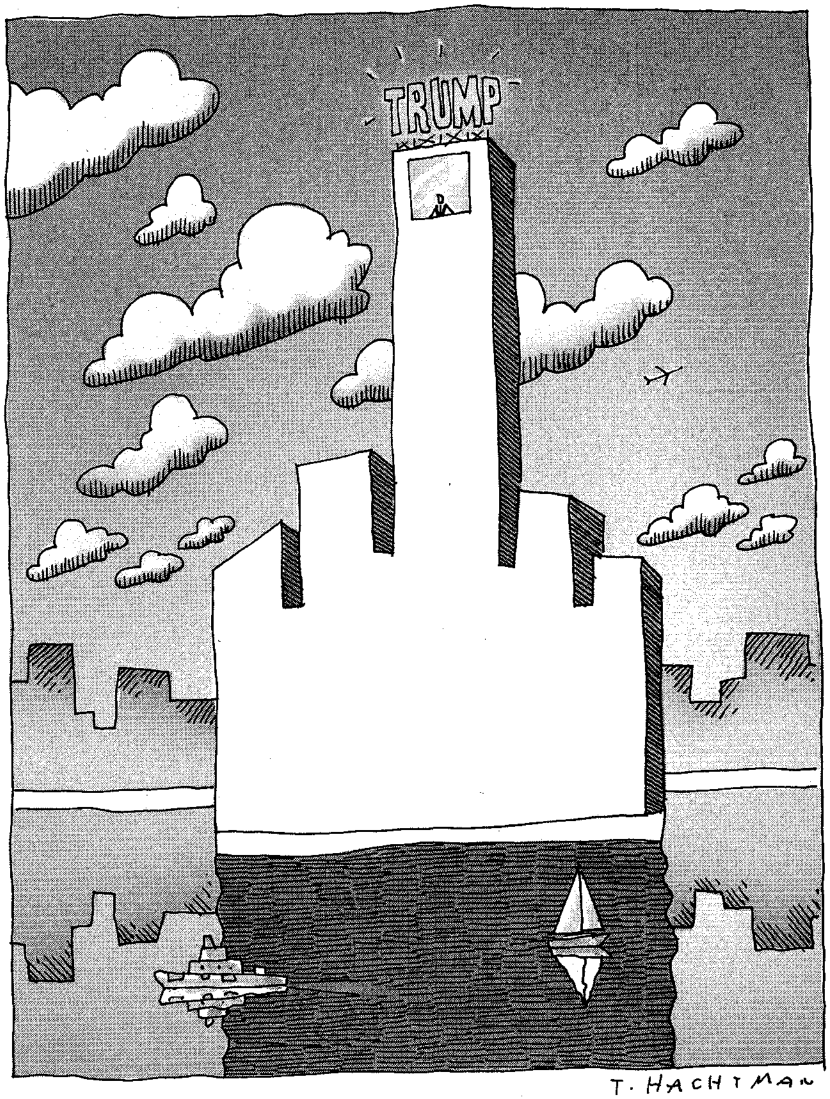
in terms of the meaning that you give it." This may sound a bit like Phenomenology 101, but, considering that her movie managed to escape an X rating, in spite of the fact that it features any number of images that merit an X in France—erection, fellatio, penetration, ejaculation—either the French censors are a highly gullible bunch or Breillat is one hell of a talker.

The director, who has six novels under her belt as well as six films, is an attractive woman with shoulder-length auburn hair who dresses with the sort of understated French chic that is the envy of women everywhere: she was wearing a fitted but not too fitted black cap-sleeved T-shirt, black jeans, gold hoops, and a silver watch, all put together with a touch of *je m'en fous* brio. Of course, to make the kind of movie that Breillat has made—in which the most graphic sexual acts are played out on the screen in the service of a larger vision that is concerned not only with "transgressing" taboos but with "the spectatorial gaze" and "transfiguring purifications" and just about everything else high-falutinly theoretical you can think of—one needs a level of moxie bordering on the megalomaniacal.

Breillat's convictions may seem a hodgepodge of Marxist post-feminist thinking, yet it is impossible not to be impressed by the didactic fervor of her beliefs, as they are conveyed between bites of duck salad and with the aid of an overworked interpreter. The director seems to think of herself as a teacher, and of her cinema as a series of leading questions about love and degradation that others dare not ask. "I wanted to bring my audiences to the things that they would normally find immoral and reprehensible," she proclaimed. "I find those things just the opposite." Her touchstones are highbrow ones; they include Man Ray's "stunt" films and Nagisa Oshima's "In the Realm of the Senses." And although she hasn't yet seen Kubrick's "Eyes Wide Shut," she is ready to jump to the late director's defense, castigating the stupidity of censors who function as part of a "two-tiered democracy," and who think that "the masses have to be protected."

"Romance" is the story of a young schoolteacher, Marie (Caroline Ducey), and her anti-sentimental education at the hands of three men: her male-model boyfriend, who refuses to touch her; an older man named Robert, who educates her in the art of submission; and Paolo, a one-night stand (played by Rocco Siffredi, an international porn star) whom Marie rejects, even though he is the only man who is able to make love to her without preconditions. "Romance" is Siffredi's first non-porn venture, and his extremely camera-ready anatomy, which the cinematographer lingered on lovingly, has given the film a boost in the buzz department. As has the fact that it was made by a woman. Hailed as "the most sexually audacious movie since 'Last Tango' " (in which, coincidentally, Breillat briefly appeared), "Romance" has played to enthusiastic audiences in Europe. Whether it will create the same level of excitement in American viewers—or whether it will be construed, for all its revelatory bravado, as insufficiently liberated (in the end, the heroine finds true happiness by having a child)—remains to be seen. What's clear is that the trailer is as sexy as can be and that, so far, the director's luck has held, since Trimark Pictures, which is releasing the film, has decided to distribute "Romance" without a rating. Breillat isn't worried. With a Gallic shrug, she's on to other appointments—where, you can be sure, she'll have the last word.

—DAPHNE MERKIN



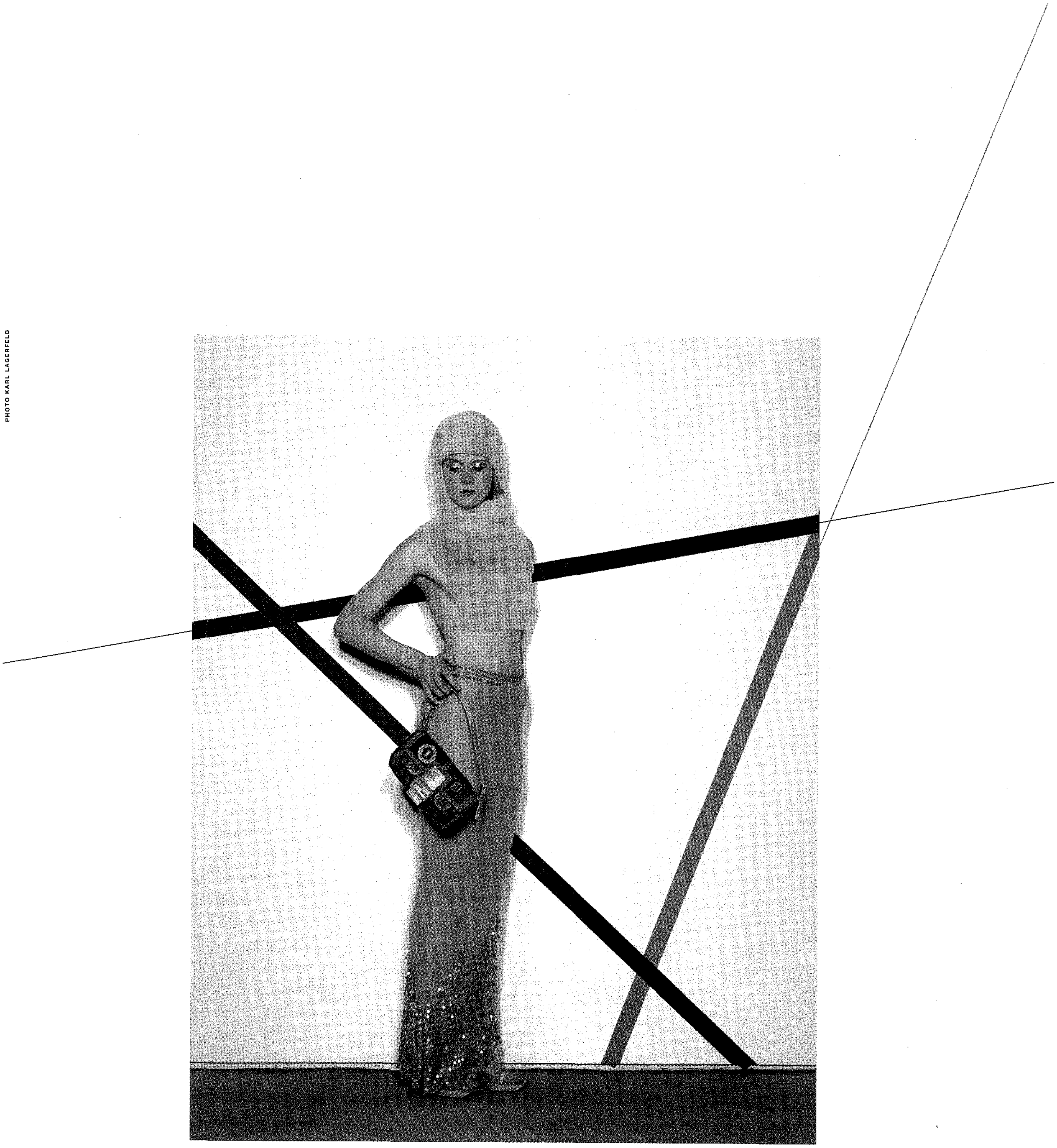
T. HACHTMAN

INK

Why American kids don't consider Harry Potter an insufferable prig.

By now, it's possible that the eleven-year-old in your life is on his or her second reading of "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban," the latest volume in the insanely popular series of British children's novels, which was published in the United States last week. One reason that American kids relate so well to Harry, the adolescent wizard,

PHOTO KARL LAGERFELD



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may be that he speaks their language—literally. The editions of the Harry Potter books sold here have been custom-edited for their Yankee audience.

"I wasn't trying to, quote, 'Americanize' them," Arthur Levine, the books' United States editor, said. "What I was trying to do is translate, which I think is different. I wanted to make sure that an American kid reading the book would have the same literary experience that a British kid would have. A kid should be confused or challenged when the author wants the kid to be confused or challenged and not because of a difference of language."

So, whereas British Harry checks a timetable for his wizarding classes, which he loves so much that he dreads going on holiday, American Harry consults a schedule and hates vacation. British Harry loves pudding, including jelly. American Harry likes dessert, including jello.

Curiously, American Harry still eats crumpets and chipolatas. "We weren't trying to make it McDonald's," said Levine, who worked closely with the author, J. K. Rowling, to craft a vernacular that would sound authentically British without being "incomprehensible or unnecessarily distracting" to young Americans. For example, "cracking" becomes "spanking good," which sounds quite British, especially given the books' boarding-school setting.

There are some peculiar discrepancies. In the American editions, "wonky" becomes "crooked"; "bobbles" turn into "puff balls"; and "barking mad" translates to "complete lunatic." "Git," "ickle," and "nutters," however, are left as they are. Why does Father Christmas become Santa Claus, and "bogey" become "booger," but "budge up" not become "move over"?

"I wouldn't say it was done haphazardly—I'd say that it was not done mechanically," Levine explained. Consider the sentence "She—er—got a bit shirty with me." "We talked about 'shirty' and we decided that it was fun," Levine said. "Rather than the word's being incomprehensible, you'd know from the context what it meant, and it sounded like colorful, slangy language. 'Shirty' is a word the author intends you to stop and listen to." But there was one change in the sentence: "We italicized 'shirty' to help you know that it's not a typographical error."

As with any translation, some subtleties are inevitably lost. Everyone in the U.K. knows what Sellotape is, but for the sake of American readers the Stateside editions say Scotch tape, even though this meant sacrificing a pun. (When a wand used for casting magic spells is broken, it is repaired with Spellotape.)

The books' fantasy milieu made translating the lingo especially tricky. Levine pointed out that when a candy store is stocked with Fizzing Whizzbees, Pepper Imps, and Cockroach Cluster it's supposed to sound exotic, and replacing these sweets with M&M's and Tootsie Rolls would be out of the question. So when he came upon mint "humbugs" in Rowling's text, he decided to let them be. " 'Humbug' is clearly a magical term," Levine said. "It's something that should be imagined." Except it's not. It's a common triangular sucking candy. —DANIEL RADOSH

DEPT. OF MOONLIGHTING

Philip Johnson does dishes.

AFTER six decades spent creating steel-and-glass towers for corporate titans, Philip Johnson will cap his ninety-third year with a line of dinnerware. Beginning September 22nd, anyone who has a hundred and fifty dollars will be able to pop into Bloomingdale's sixth floor and pick up a nine-piece place setting designed by the architect.

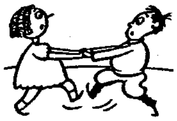
Although architects have been known to put their names on crockery from time to time (Michael Graves, for example, has his own line at Target), this marks the first time that Johnson has done retail. Sitting behind a desk in his office on the thirty-fourth floor of the Seagram Building (which Johnson designed with Mies van der Rohe) the other day, the architect dismissed concerns that this new venture constitutes slumming. He had on a blue suit, a crisply knotted gold tie, and his signature oversized black-rimmed glasses. "I love to design anything," he said. "There's pleasure in going into any area where you're an amateur. My first design was a watch for my sister that Cartier made in the thirties. It didn't run well, but it was awful pretty. I once designed eyeglasses—I'm an amateur in that field, too." Johnson paused and peered across the desk. "But I like my glasses better than yours."

Johnson's plates are white German porcelain and feature urban scenes taken from mid-nineteenth-century engravings. "It isn't really 'design,' but I can pick pretty cities for a plate as well as anybody," he explained. According to Johnson, it was Alex von Bidder, a managing partner at the Johnson-designed Four Seasons, who first commissioned the plates. But the restaurant rejected the finished product. "The Four Seasons didn't want to serve food on a city," Johnson said incredulously. "The restaurant tried the plates out on the clients, and they objected. I don't see what the problem is with food on a city," he added with a shrug.

"Plates used to be decorated with scenes of castle gardens and lovely maidens," Johnson continued. "But modernity—which says that a plate is something utilitarian—has this terrible hold on people. Way back, William Morris said, 'Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful.' That's nonsense. Nothing *has* to be useful. Why, just think of those nineteenth-century living rooms decorated with plates. They weren't useful. *Useful.*" He pronounced the word as if it were a curse. Still, there are some areas of commerce that even Philip Johnson won't venture into. "The manufacturer came back and wants me to design espresso cups," he confessed. "Now *that* is utilitarian. That's too much." —ANDREW ESSEX

CHILDREN'S DEPT.

Swing time for grade-schoolers.



ON a sunny afternoon, ninety fifth and sixth graders from city schools got ready to trip lightly and fantastically in the American Ballroom Theatre Com-

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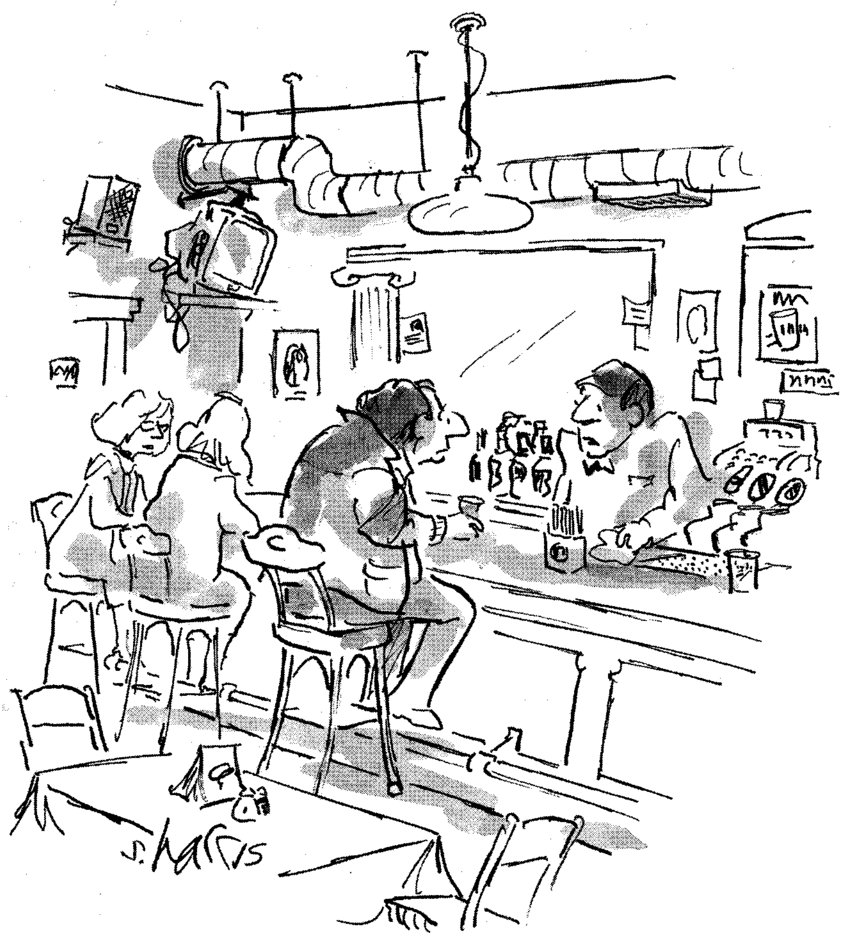

"The days of the bartender-psychologist are over, but I can help if you have any software problems."

• •

pany's third annual competition, held in the World Financial Center's Winter Garden. The kids, in nine teams of five couples each, were comfortable with their paired irregularities: fatties with skinnies, talls with shorts, darks with lights. In their dress-up clothes, and draped in ribbon sashes of their team's designated color, they stood on a stage under a ten-story-high vaulted glass-and-steel dome, facing a grove of fifty-foot-high palm trees.

The kids came to attention at a call from Pierre Dulaine, the illustrious show dancer who, in 1994, started the Dancing Classrooms outreach educational program. This afternoon's competition was the season's climax. Mr. Dulaine, who has a Franglais accent, explained to the kids that a couple from each team would do a dance—merengue, foxtrot, rumba, tango, and swing. Points would be awarded by five judges, all taking their responsibilities solemnly: Sandy Duncan, the Broadway star; Patricia Birch and Graciela Daniele, the choreographers; Marge Champion, the legendary dancer of stage and screen (as a girl, she was the live model for Walt Disney's "Snow White"); and the former baseball pitcher Jim Bouton.

Jim *Bouton*?

Indeed, and, under a brush cut, looking as feisty as he did in 1964.

"I'm the best ballroom dancer who ever pitched right-handed for the Yankees in the World Series," he explained. "We lost in seven, but I won *my* two games."

A hefty woman in a red-and-black dress stepped forward, sticking out her hand to Bouton.

"Raisa Chernina. For Russian-American Broadcasting Company. We do segment for Russian program 'Pulse of Planet,' " she said sternly. "Anchorman. Alexander Lachman," she went on, introducing her companion, a thin gentleman who was attired in nifty ivory-colored pants and matching vest and who was eating an oversized cone of chocolate frozen yogurt. "Anchorman will interview you, with cameraman. At end. O.K.?" Miss Chernina said.

"O.K.," Jim Bouton said.

"One million people watch 'Pulse of Planet.' We interview celebrities. De Niro. Ringo Starr. Clinton. Gorbachev. Pat Birch. You. O.K.?"

"O.K.," said Bouton.

Onstage, the children were winding up their rehearsal.

"Escort position, escort position, please!" Pierre Dulaine was exhorting them.

"My wife and I got started with ballroom dancing when one of our kids was getting married and we didn't want to embarrass ourselves at the wedding," Bouton said.

The competition was about to begin, and Pierre Dulaine spoke to the children who were about to start the merengue. "Remember," he said. "You will be judged on, one, how well you move your hips, two, your posture, and, three, how elegant you look."

The loud recorded music of "Suavemente" blared forth, and the kids started giving their all to the merengue. Miss Chernina poked her elbow at her cameraman and nodded in the direction of the little moving hips, the brave posture, the sheer elegance. Different couples then foxtrotted. Others rumbaed. Still others tangoed. Nine couples wound up, to Glenn Miller's "In the Mood," knocking themselves out swinging.

Finally, the judges reported. Two teams—one wearing blue sashes and representing P.S. 161, in Harlem, and one in yellow sashes, representing P.S. 11, in Chelsea—were tied for first place. Pierre Dulaine announced a dance-off—"the equivalent of an overtime game," Bouton said. More swinging. Decision by noise from the audience. Yellow won.

Miss Chernina rounded up the winners, and her cameraman filmed them looking happy. When the Russian trio got to Jim Bouton, they asked him if judging was anything like baseball. After some thought, Bouton said, "It was like the World Series pressure. I needed to match the dedication of the kids." Miss Chernina gave a deep, Slavic sigh and said, " 'Pulse of Planet' broadcast will be very good."

—LILLIAN ROSS

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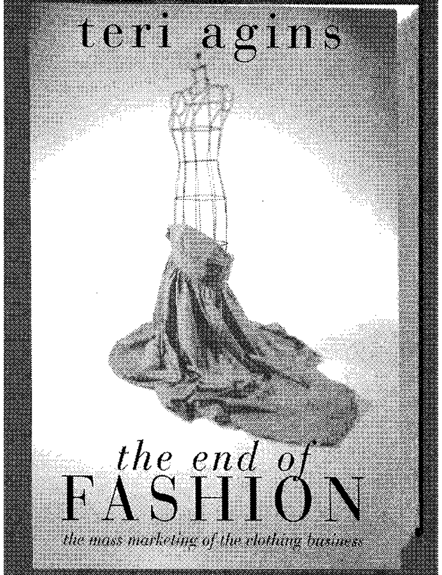

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LETTER FROM THE BALKANS

THE NEXT WAR

As Milosevic's empire shrinks, new resentments inflame Outer Serbia.

BY WILLIAM FINNEGAN

Before the war with NATO was half over, people in Montenegro were predicting what they called the Saddam Scenario. The Western alliance would drive Slobodan Milosevic's forces from Kosovo, just as it had driven the Iraqis from Kuwait, but Washington would decline to push on to Belgrade (Baghdad), leaving the Yugoslav dictator in power.

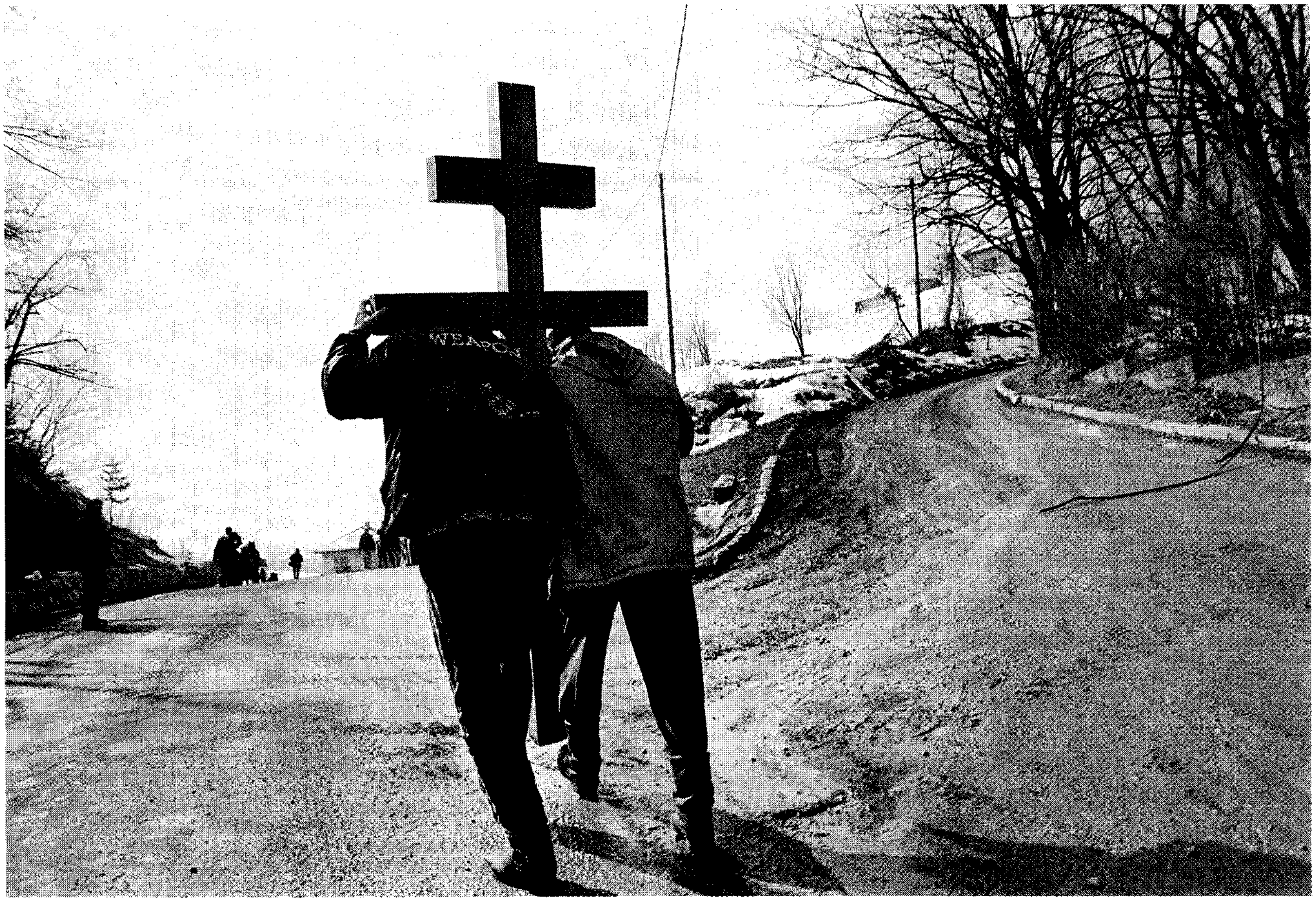
Milosevic, of course, is no Saddam Hussein. He does not murder his domestic political opponents en masse. Indeed, the Serbian political opposition has become energized since the end of the war, mounting anti-Milosevic rallies in many towns and cities. But look closely at the photographs of those rallies and you may note, waving above the angry crowds, a disturbing number of three-fingered Serbian Orthodox salutes—the gang sign of militant Serb nationalism. Large parts of those crowds, in other words, are not unhappy with Milosevic for starting four wars in the last eight years. They are unhappy with him for losing those wars—for failing to secure a Greater Serbia. All of Milosevic's main domestic political rivals are, in fact, avid nationalists themselves. So far, none present a serious threat to his power. The Saddam Scenario has thus unfolded just as people in Montenegro feared it would.

And Montenegrins have special reason to be afraid, because the wars of the Yugoslav Succession are most likely not yet over, and little Montenegro—the only other republic left inside the rump Yugoslavia with big, incorrigibly aggressive Serbia—is now the prime candidate for Belgrade's next attempt to conquer and brutally absorb a neighbor.

A beautiful, mountainous, monastery-dotted land, Montenegro is the only part of Yugoslavia with a coastline, and, for that reason, its strategic significance greatly outweighs its small area (the size of Connecticut) and small population (six hundred and twenty thousand). Its government, moreover, has been following an eerily familiar path as it struggles to escape Belgrade's embrace. Disputes over trade, customs duties, control of the military, the treatment of ethnic minorities, and relations with the West have escalated to the point where Montenegro is threatening to hold a referendum on independence this fall. President Milosevic, meanwhile, has been quietly beefing up the forces of the Yugoslav Army inside Montenegro, and few observers expect him to allow Serbia's last "sister republic" to secede without a fight—any more than he allowed Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo to leave unmauled.

Each of those conflicts has had its own invincibly complex history, and the colliding nationalisms of the former Yugoslavia have produced many more villains than Milosevic and his ethnic cleansers. The politicians who led the other war parties in Croatia and Bosnia, and the mafias that now dominate the region's economy, also have a great deal to answer for. Still, Milosevic has been the main perpetrator of the military aggression, the political brutalization, and the sheer criminal rapacity that have led to the destruction and impoverishment of what, only a decade ago, was one of the most prosperous, liberal countries in Eastern Europe. And, despite having failed completely in his campaign to expand the Serbian state to include Serb-populated territories in Bosnia and Croatia—and now, with the effective loss of Kosovo, having failed even to maintain Serbia's prewar borders—Milosevic remains a powerful and dangerous figure.

Just as dangerous, however, and, in the long run, perhaps more urgently in need of understanding, is the political psychology of extreme Serb nationalism. Deliberately whipped up, beginning in the nineteen-eighties, with fantastic, overwhelming onslaughts of televised propaganda, the Serb nationalist movement and the failed Greater Serbian adventures it has inspired have not only produced death and destruction among Bosnian Muslims, Croats, and Kosovar Albanians; they have also left vast numbers of Serbs in the lurch. More than a million have been displaced, fleeing either to neutral countries or to the increasingly cold comfort (and cratered economy) of what is sometimes called Inner Serbia.



What will they do with their rage? The Serb exodus out of Sarajevo after the Dayton agreement. Photograph by Gilles Peress.

MAGNUM

Many other Serbs, meanwhile, still live in Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, southern Hungary, and other scattered lands—relics of the intricate settlement patterns that evolved over the centuries during which the Ottoman and Hapsburg Empires owned the Balkans. They live in what we might call Outer Serbia, and the ferocious Serb nationalism that Milosevic and his allies did so much to arouse still burns hot and volatile in most of these outlying territories. After spending several weeks travelling through Outer Serbia, I was particularly struck by the plight of the Serbs in the war-ruined Bosnian statelet known as Republika Srpska.

Then there are the places where war still threatens—notably, Montenegro. It's often not clear in Montenegro exactly who considers himself a Serb and who considers himself a Montenegrin, given that the two groups share a language (Serbian), a religion (Serbian Orthodox), and a great deal of history. In fact, ethnic identity, a fluid construct at all times, is so ambiguous in Montenegro that the conflict threatening to break out there may, in the end, look less like another Milosevic *Anschluss* than like a truly fratricidal civil war.

Everyone in the former Yugoslavia is stuck with having to reinvent himself, with having to construct new “imagined communities” from the debris of the old Communist federation. This dilemma is especially vexed when it comes to the millions of Serbs living outside the homeland. What will they do with their xenophobia, their psychologically mangled ethnocentrism, their war culture of paranoia and denial, and their isolation, disappointment, and guilt?

“We are God’s people.” The Yugoslav Army lieutenant glared at me, took a sip of beer, and slowly repeated, “We are God’s people.”

“*Nebeski narod*,” I murmured.

“Exactly.” The lieutenant seemed pleasantly surprised that I knew the Serbian phrase he had in mind. “Put that in your story,” he ordered.

My interrogation had taken a turn toward the political, which was good. I had been arrested, along with another American reporter, at a roadblock outside Herceg Novi, a town on the Montenegrin coast. The NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia was in its second month, Montenegro had been heavily hit during the previous week, and I had developed an awful idea that the soldiers rummaging through my notebooks were looking for a pattern. If I had been working in areas that were subsequently hit by NATO, then perhaps I was really a spy, calling in the coördinates of targets to the enemy. If they found such a pattern, what could I say? All in all, I preferred to be hearing about how the Serbs are God’s people.

The lieutenant and I sat on either side of a large wooden table in a chilly room in an old naval barracks. There were bunk beds pushed against the whitewashed walls. A breeze off the Adriatic rustled through pine trees outside. The lieutenant swigged from his beer. He was about thirty, broad-shouldered, with jet-black hair, a deep tan, and piercing yellow eyes. He'd learned his English, he'd told me, while working as a bartender at a Club Med on an island near here before the war. He'd used it to pick up British girls.

"Eight years we've been fighting these wars," he said now. "Do you know how long eight years of war is? That's like a hundred years for you."

His experiences in Croatia and Bosnia and Kosovo, the lieutenant said, had stolen his youth and left him a hard and bitter man. He didn't seem to be saying this to frighten me. Rather, he seemed to be asking for sympathy. Earlier, he had said that I obviously interviewed only "rich people"—not ordinary Yugoslavs like him and his men.

The lieutenant wore a sidearm and a black baseball cap adorned with gold and silver braid. Apart from his fits of bravado and mysticism ("God's people"), he seemed sincere in his desire to explain his views.

"Every war we have fought was a defensive war," he said. "People don't understand that."

People who have listened to Serb politicians for the past decade do understand, and only too well, I thought, that this is the nationalist view. But I said nothing, and the lieutenant launched into a history lesson. I tried to nod agreeably at each tale of the persecution and betrayal of the Serbs.

"This war is about history," the lieutenant was saying. "All our wars are about history. You need to go back a thousand years to understand anything here. A thousand years! You think this is Slobo's war, but we don't care about Slobo or Milo or any of these politicians." Slobo was, of course, Milosevic. Milo was Milo Djukanovic, the President of Montenegro. Disgust with politicians, including Milosevic, is widespread in the Yugoslav Army, but relations between Djukanovic and the Army are, given his government's moves toward secession, especially tense.

An older officer strode into the room, and the lieutenant stiffened. The older officer's uniform bore no indication of his rank. He sat down and peered dyspeptically at me for a long, unnerving minute. The lieutenant quietly removed his baseball cap. He would serve as translator. This, apparently, would be the interrogation proper.

The older officer began to speak, his voice sharp and angry.

How many NATO planes did I think the Yugoslav Army had shot down?

I said I didn't know.

Fifty planes had been shot down, my interrogator said, and more than a hundred NATO soldiers killed. How could I not know that?

"Actually, I saw something about it on TV," I said, meaning Belgrade state TV, which was true.

My interrogator's face relaxed. He nodded grimly. And why did I think NATO was fighting this war?

I waited.

Because NATO needed a reason to exist, now that the Cold War was over. And so it attacked a small country like Yugoslavia. NATO was worse than the Nazis. CNN broadcast nothing but lies. The new world order was just another name for American imperialism.

This harangue went on. Whenever I was called upon for comment, I found I could truthfully say, "I saw that on TV." My interrogator began to seem impressed by my familiarity with the facts.

Then a strapping young soldier came in, set my laptop computer on the table, and started tapping. Though he said nothing, I found his project unsettling. What was he finding in there? Abruptly, he turned the monitor to me. "Did you write this?" he asked, in easy English. The screen showed an anti-Milosevic editorial that I had written some weeks before. I nodded sadly.

He began to scroll through the document, reading it aloud—in Serbian, doing what sounded like a fine job of instant translation—to a room that had become, I thought, exceedingly silent. At the end of each paragraph, he would pause, and my interrogator would ask, his voice raw with rage, "Did you write this?"

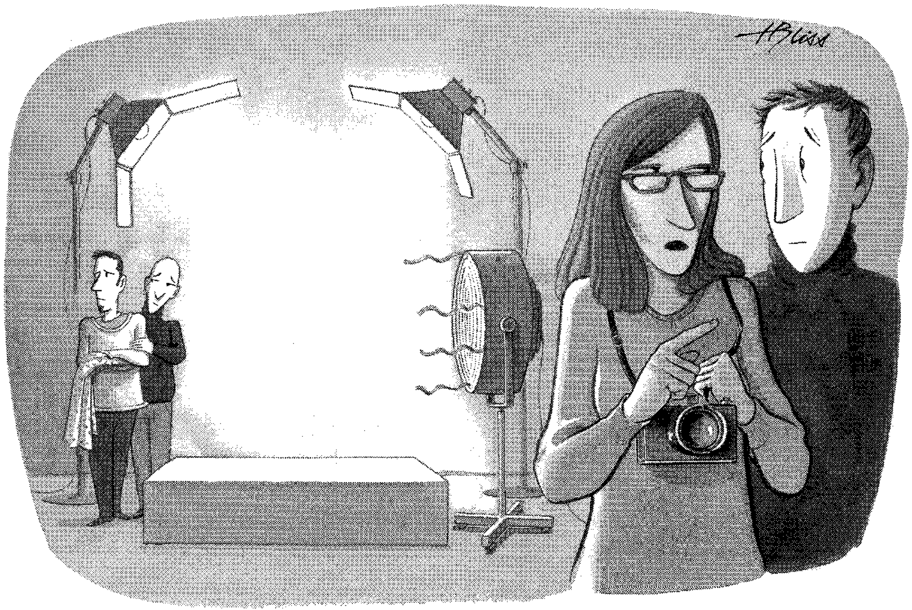
"Yes," I would whisper, and "Yes" again, my pride of authorship turned to gall. The piece sounded awful in Serbian.

Finally, the hateful incantation ended. There was a long, miserable silence. Everyone seemed to be studying me with extravagant disgust. My face felt hot. My mouth, I found, was extraordinarily dry. The lieutenant and his superior muttered to each other, shaking their heads. Maybe, I thought, this wasn't really so bad. Better to be seen as another snivelling propagandist than as a dangerous spy.

The lieutenant sighed, spun his cap on the table, and asked if I had any complaints about my treatment.

This was an excellent sign. "No," I said. "You have been very correct."

Within the hour, my colleague and I were free. We drove north, into Croatia, along a splendid coast still pocked with burned-out hotels from the "defensive" assault that Milosevic's forces



"Call the Ford agency—another supermodel just blew away."

had launched in 1991 on Dubrovnik, one of the world's most beautiful cities.

It isn't really necessary to rehearse a thousand years of Balkan history and myth in order to consider the wars of the Yugoslav Succession. It is, however, helpful to be acquainted with the antagonists' self-understanding. And so I had found the yellow-eyed lieutenant in the barracks in Herceg Novi a compelling character for reasons beyond self-concern, and I wished I could have asked him more questions. (He refused even to tell me his name.) He was evidently Montenegrin. He was obviously a Serb nationalist. He had thrown around the word "we," meaning, variously, Serbs and the Yugoslav Army and working-class Montenegrins. The righteous community of "God's people" in which he claimed membership most likely meant the Serbian Orthodox Church, but *nebeski narod* is by now less a religious term than a mind-numbing refrain in the patriotic pop music known as turbofolk. It was also unlikely that he was a churchgoer, since few Serbs are. He had been full of racist scorn for ethnic Albanians, Bosnian Muslims, Catholic Croats, and Gypsies, and yet I had a sneaking suspicion that the lieutenant himself might actually be a closet Yugoslav. His soldier's hatred for politicians suggested that he knew just how they had botched the transition from Communism—by tearing apart a troubled but functioning country in their blood-spattered grabs for power. Indeed, remembering those halcyon Club Med days, he was probably even susceptible to bouts of what people scornfully call Yugonostalgia.

In Tito's Yugoslavia, nationalist agitation was forbidden. All was proletarian "brotherhood and unity," and the dictator-for-life did a masterly job of balancing the competing interests and sensitivities of Yugoslavia's many ethnicities. Because Serbs were the country's largest group, and their capital, Belgrade, was the country's capital, Serb domination, which had plagued prewar Yugoslavia, was a constant threat. Even so, no significant Serb nationalist movement emerged until the nineteen-eighties, when a severe economic decline hit Yugoslavia following Tito's death. Weak central leadership—a revolving Presidency had replaced Tito—meant, moreover,

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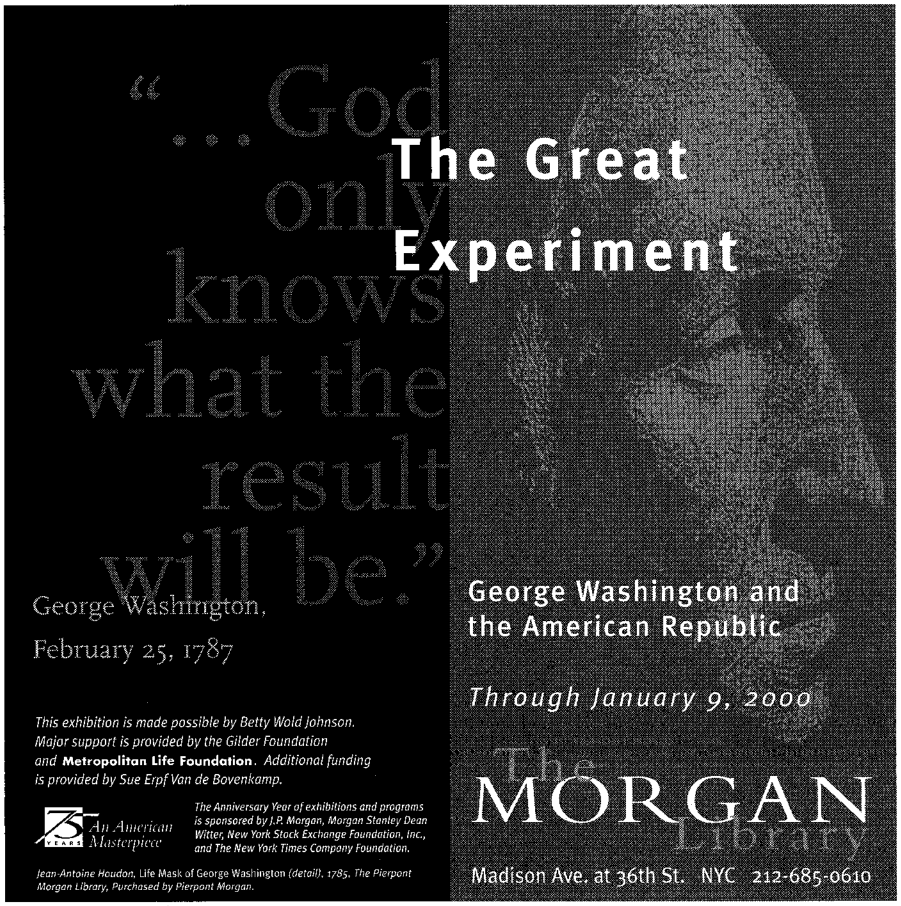
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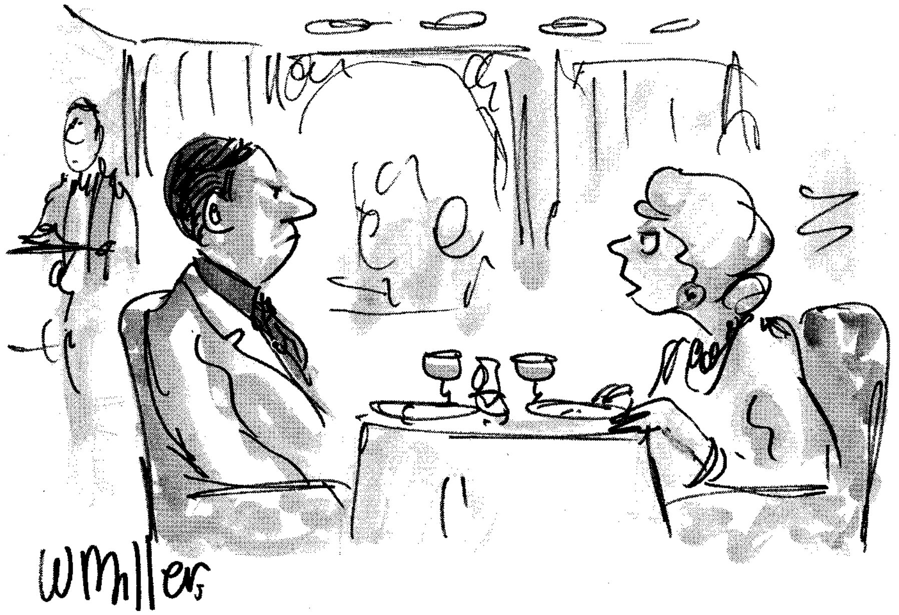

"I'm not trying to change you—I'm trying to enhance you."

• •

that no serious reform could be initiated.

And it was in this context of economic desperation and political gloom that, in 1986, a group of Serb intellectuals, including former dissidents, issued a manifesto blaming Tito for having blocked Serbia's legitimate claims and aspirations, particularly in Kosovo. This manifesto coincided with the rise of Slobodan Milosevic, an ambitious politician looking for a way to survive the approaching collapse of the Communist system. Casting his lot with the nationalists, he seized control of the Serbian Communist Party in 1987. He consolidated his rule in Serbia, ruthlessly and brilliantly playing on the fears of the rural masses and the industrial proletariat and easily winning the republic's first multiparty election. His ambitions, though, extended much farther, and most of the Yugoslav federation's five other republics soon ran screaming from what they called Serboslavia. Milosevic wanted to reëstablish central state power in Belgrade, to become a new Tito, but without the Titoist constraints on Serb hegemony.

That dream failing—and that it would fail became clear almost at once, since Slovenia, the country's wealthiest republic, and the farthest geographically from Serbia, was determined to secede—Milosevic undertook to create his Greater Serbia, effectively redrawing borders by force. Thus did the momentum toward war—in Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo—become unstoppable.

MONTENEGRO is trying to escape the ogre's clutches without a war. The present rebellion against Belgrade began in 1997, when Djukanovic, a sharp young politician and Milosevic protégé, recognizing the disastrous direction in which the dictator was taking the country, changed horses and defeated Milosevic's candidate for the republic's Presidency. The election was close, reflecting the divided loyalties of Montenegrins: the rural, mountainous north tends to identify with Serbia, whereas the coast and the capital, Podgorica, identify with Montenegro. (And some unknown percentage of the latter camp favors independence.) Still, since taking office early last year, the Djukanovic government has consistently resisted the pressure from Belgrade to fall into line: cultivating ties with the West, allowing a free press, and refusing to support the war in Kosovo. Since the end of the war, the government has become bolder still, proposing to introduce its own currency, to hold its high-risk referendum on independence, and even to arrest any indicted war criminals, including Milosevic himself, who set foot in Montenegro.

Rumors of a coup or a civil war have been rife for at least a year. The Army takes its orders from Belgrade, and this makes for a situation of stark dual authority. When, for instance, I was detained by soldiers and produced a press accreditation from the Montenegrin Secretariat of Information, I was told, loweringly, "We don't recognize that government." The Montenegrin government, meanwhile, has a large, militarized police force—no match for the Yugoslav Army but reportedly ready to fight.

Montenegro has a significant Albanian minority, and during the war in Kosovo the talk in the cafés about the ethnic cleansers working next door was hushed and frightened. I sometimes felt as if the whole population were holding its breath, afraid to exhale and cause a catastrophe.

Or perhaps not the whole population. There is, after all, the large core of Milosevic supporters, whose leaders are furious about Djukanovic's opposition to Belgrade, and who speak about Kosovo and NATO in fundamentalist terms. "NATO sees this government here as its puppet," Zorica Tajic-Rabrenovic, a pro-Milosevic deputy in the Montenegrin assembly, told me. "We expected from the international community a human face, not the face of Lucifer." A sharp-featured, glamorous woman with a great mane of red hair, Ms. Tajic-Rabrenovic reminded me of an angry right-wing activist from, say, South Carolina. Her speech was full of Satanist imagery, and, like other pro-Belgrade Montenegrins, she used the first-person plural when she spoke of Serbia; for example, "We are a very old country, and the heart of our culture is Kosovo."

A few days later, I sat in a café with Ranko Krivokapic, a parliamentarian and a member of Djukanovic's ruling coalition. For a politician of his importance, he was young (thirty-seven), and, even for a Montenegrin, who must be the world's tallest people, he was tall (over six-six). He had spent several years as an M.P. in Belgrade before joining the Djukanovic government, so for him haggling with the Milosevic regime was nothing new. "We are just trying to absorb this situation," he said. "But Mr. Milosevic, you must understand, will try to open up all the wars he can—here, in Macedonia, wherever. If he can open several crises at once, he can increase his value as a negotiator."

Many people see Milosevic in this

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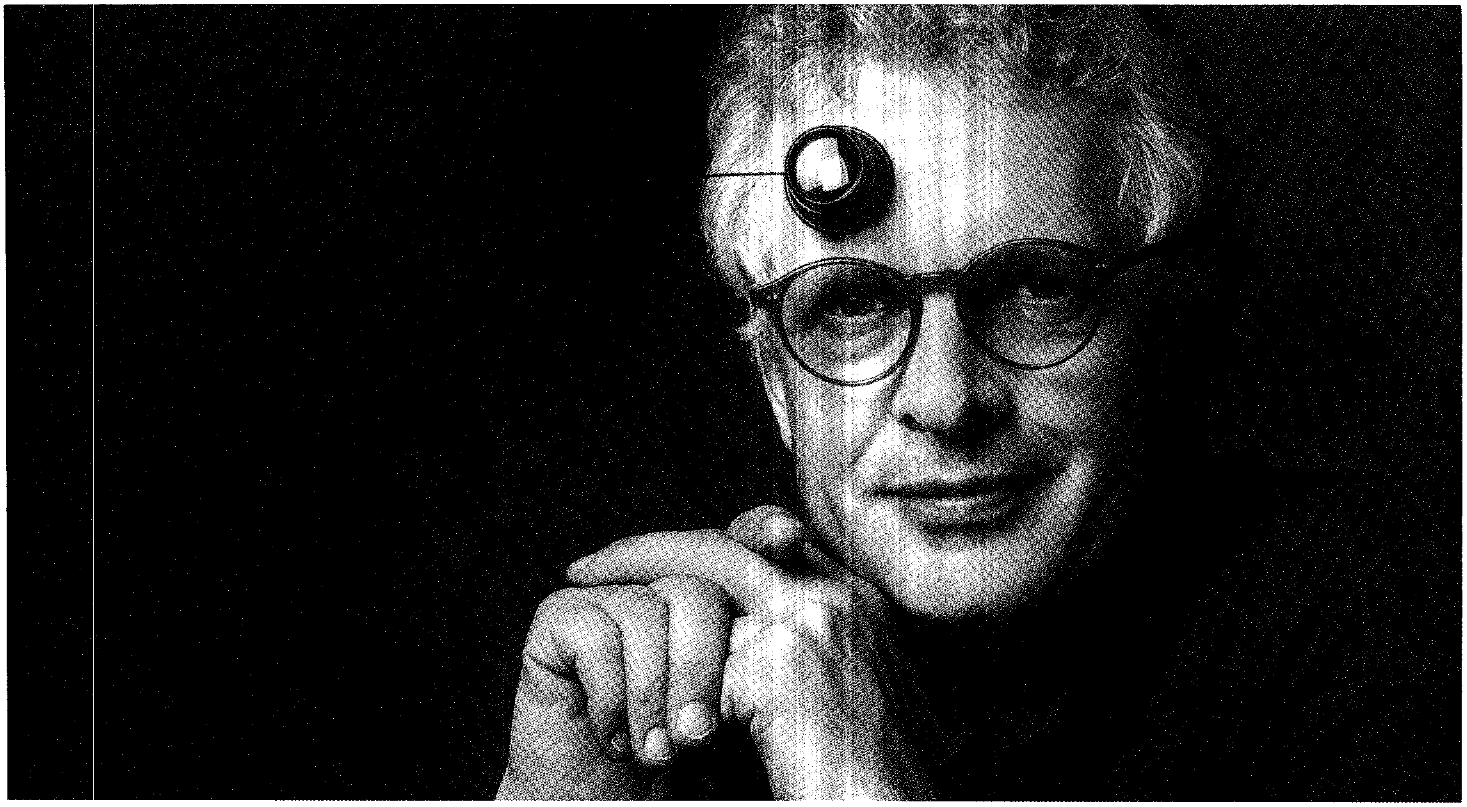

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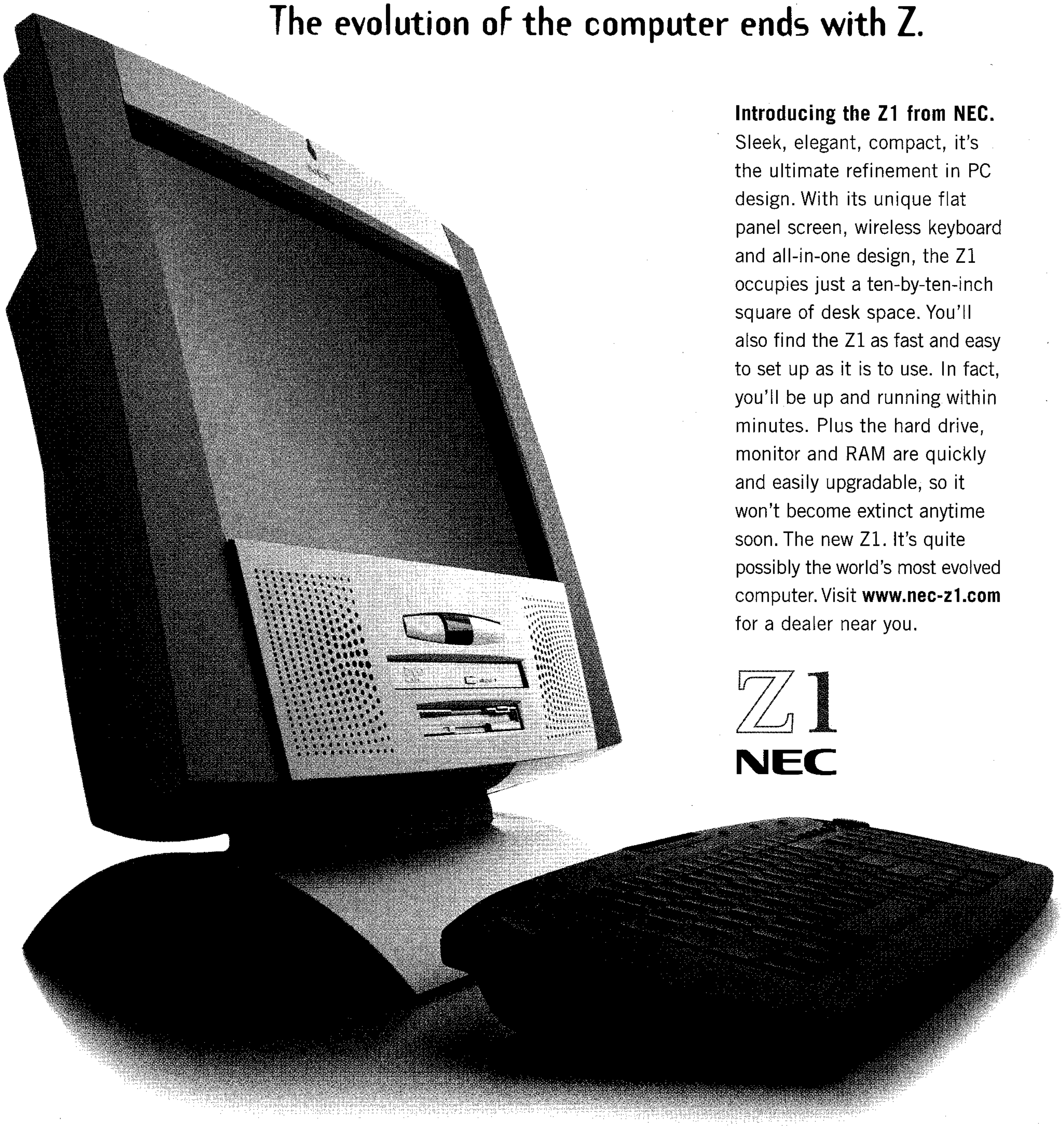

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Machiavellian light, but Krivokapic seemed, unusually, not to personalize the problem of Serb aggression. “It is the logic of nationalism,” he said simply. “Milosevic cannot solve internal problems, and the economy is constantly going down, so he must show power—must fight with Albanians, or whomever. He needs enemies, and ordinary people here think in terms of archetypes—who is their enemy, who is their friend—and those archetypes are easily manipulated by whoever controls TV. Here TV is like a new religion. People believe what they hear. It’s all emotion—we are good, they are bad. The same thing could happen in other places, I’m sure. Even Germany, which was a highly developed country, became vulnerable during an economic crisis.”

To my surprise, Krivokapic added, “When this is all over, Serbia is going to need some kind of de-Nazification.”

Krivokapic seemed strangely immune, I thought, to the rampant local strain of political paranoia. And yet it is no coincidence that his party, the Social Democratic Party, while it is influential—and, he told me proudly, is the only member from Yugoslavia of the Socialist International—is very small. His brand of rational, issue-oriented politics is just not what’s selling in the tribalized Balkans these days. Indeed, the Social Democratic Party has long favored independence for Montenegro, but not for nationalist reasons. It favors independence, Krivokapic told me, simply because economic and democratic development will be too difficult while Montenegro is chained to Serbia—particularly a Serbia physically destroyed by NATO and still not “cured of its nationalism.”

PEOPLE may miss Tito’s Yugoslavia, which at least kept the nationalist demons down, but they are also missing—in a different sense of the word—any tradition of liberal democracy. This is something that the West has been discovering the hard way in Bosnia. Often cited by President Clinton as a scene of triumph for American and European diplomacy and peacekeeping, Bosnia has in fact been strangely frozen in time—politically, economically, even emotionally—since the Dayton Peace Agreement ended the fighting there, in late 1995. “Dayton ended the violence

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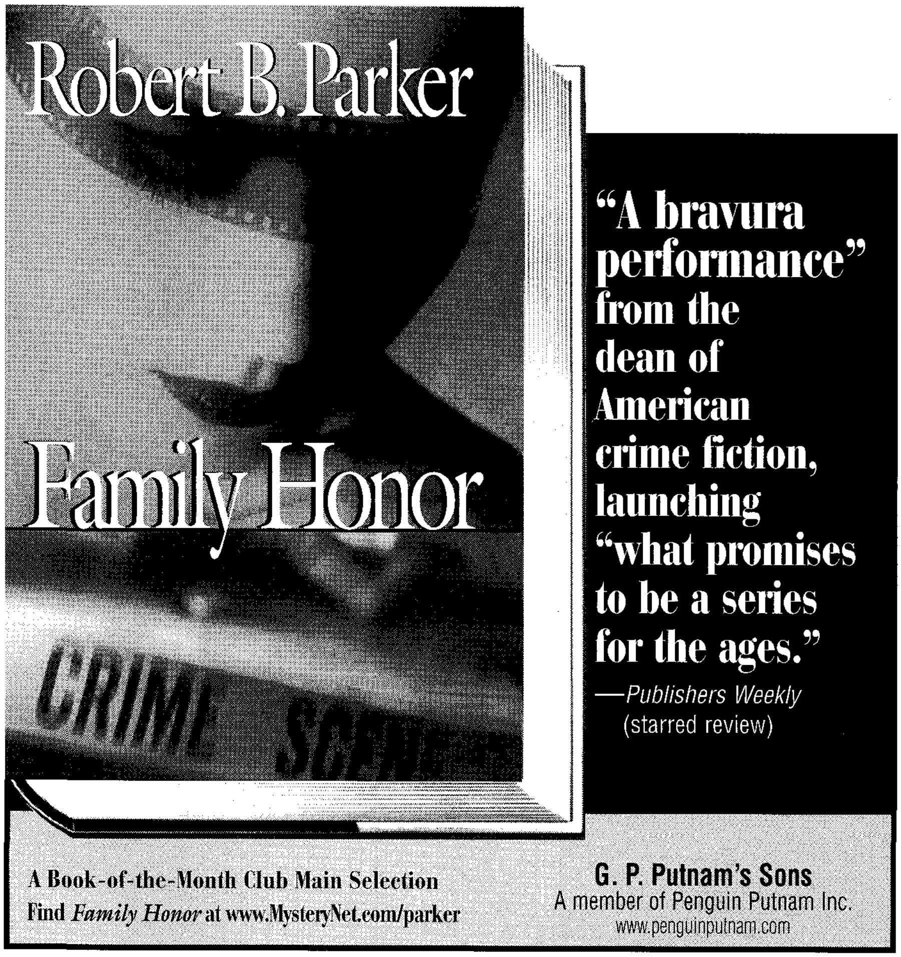
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but not the war" is how Jacques Paul Klein, the senior United Nations administrator for Bosnia, puts it.

Bosnia's was, of course, a three-way war, effectively concluded by partition and occupation. The three Bosnian "entities" still form one country, and the goal of the international supervisors is to weave them back together into a unitary state, with refugees returning to their prewar homes, and with a democratically elected central government whose legitimacy is accepted by most Bosnians. Little progress has been made toward this goal. Even Sarajevo remains a vastly less prosperous, more Muslim-chauvinist city than it was before the war.

During the NATO offensive this spring, Bosnian Muslims and Croats were, as a rule, enthusiastic about the bombing of Serbia. It wasn't that the Kosovo Albanians had been especially sympathetic to the Bosnians while the Bosnians fought the Serbs—quite the opposite—but that people were simply pleased to see Belgrade getting a dose of what its forces had been dispensing throughout the region for a decade. I even got the impression that some Bosnian Croats and Muslims wouldn't have minded seeing NATO turn its guns on some of their nominal countrymen in the Republika Srpska. Meanwhile, in Banja Luka, the capital of the Republika Srpska, Serb mobs were trashing the British and American embassy liaison offices.

The big problem with introducing democracy to the Republika Srpska has been, of all things, the will of its people. They never seem to want what the West, as represented by the United Nations, thinks they should want. In March, the United Nations' High Representative for Bosnia dismissed the country's first elected President, Nikola Poplasen, of the Serb Radical Party, for, among other things, hampering "a smooth implementation of the Dayton process." So much for democracy, many Bosnian Serbs felt, understandably. The United Nations took another big step to wrest control from the hard-liners when it took over Republika Srpska TV, which had been broadcasting a ferociously anti-NATO message.

In Banja Luka, I stopped in on Nikola Poplasen, who was easy to find, since he had refused to vacate the President's office. A coldly furious former academic in a baggy gray suit, he told me, "All the people in the Balkans—Muslims, Croats, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia—are being treated as lower beings, without political consciousness. Washington is trying to explain to us with bombs and rockets where our interests lie. Some of the newly emerged countries—Croatia, Macedonia—already have puppet regimes, and they are being treated differently from the Serbs." The war in Bosnia, Poplasen said, had been "a result of foreign interference"—and he did not mean Milosevic's arming of the Serbs.

Unlike most Bosnian cities, Banja Luka was not shelled during the war. Old and leafy, vaguely Central European, it retains a veneer—an illusion, really—of its prewar prosperity. Things, however, are missing—many things, beginning with the city's sixteen mosques, including the sixteenth-century Ferhadija Mosque, which was one of the masterworks of European architecture. These holy places were all dynamited by Serb extremists in the early days of the war. And the ancient, vibrant Muslim communities that went with them have also largely vanished. Grass grows now in the empty lot where the Ferhadija stood. Offers from international organizations to fund the rebuilding of the great mosque have been rebuffed by the local authorities. "It's a zoning matter," Poplasen, the deposed President, told me icily. Banja Luka's Serbs, it is clear, don't want the mosques—let alone the Muslims—back on any terms. They prefer their ethnically purified town, around which they stroll with an air, I thought, of aggressive, selective amnesia.

WHAT ARE YOU WEARING?

"YOU are the notorious foreigner, and I am the traitor to the nation, rendering my services to the occupier."

This was the explanation—theatrical, deft, true, self-mocking—that I got for the disapproving glances that my translator and I kept getting on the streets of Banja Luka. She was a university student, a literature major, and she asked that, if I wrote about her, I call her Tijana, after a character she liked in a Selimovic novel. She had lots of dark hair, a gymnast's build, and brilliant eyes. She confessed that she hated politics—Republika Srpska, she said, was "a joke, a fiction." She was studying for her exams in English literature, and she was much happier talking about books. She was reading Joyce, Woolf, Lawrence, Huxley, Graham Greene, and she had decided that she didn't like the modernists—"Ulysses" and "To the Lighthouse" were "too experimental," she said. Her favorite English writers were the Romantics—Shelley, Keats, and, especially, Wordsworth—although, she said, "they were really perfect when I read them, when I was twenty, and it was the war, and they were a comfort, an escape, a sort of oasis. I might feel differently about them now.”

For Tijana, as for most Bosnians, the war had changed everything. But I found her story unusually instructive. “When I was a kid, I didn't even know I was a Serb,” she said. “And I didn't know if my friends were Muslims or Croats or what. That was Yugoslavia. My grandfather fought with the Partisans, and I was really proud of that. But nobody ever talked about being Serb. My parents weren't nationalists. They still aren't.”

Tijana was in high school when Yugoslavia began to break up. Nationalist madness was suddenly in the air. People were suddenly terrified that the Ustashe, the Croatian Nazi collaborators, were returning from the dead, like vampires, looking for more Serb victims. Somebody was blowing up the mosques. Her Muslim and Croat friends were leaving town. Her father and her only brother, who was eighteen at the time, were drafted into the Bosnian Serb Army. She and her mother were in shock. Her father and her brother were sent to the front. And the next three and a half years passed like some terrible nightmare from which it was impossible to wake up.

“Every day, you just had to brace yourself for the worst news of your life,” she said. “My brother was in some of the worst places of the war. So many boys were killed. He was wounded once, in the head, but not badly. I didn't believe in God before, but I really think it was a miracle that we did not have a family tragedy.”

In 1995, the Serbs were losing territory and the Muslim and Croat armies reached the gates of Banja Luka. The city, already jammed with Serb refugees ethnically cleansed from Croatia, was a scene of mass panic. “We packed the car,” Tijana said. “We took our family photos out of the albums to save weight. It sounds silly, but we were so scared.”

As Bosnian war stories go, this wasn't harrowing—particularly because a timely truce obviated the evacuation of Banja Luka—but I didn't think it sounded silly, because the upshot was that Tijana became, in her own words, “a hard-liner.”

“Most of my friends are,” she said. “My brother, his friends. It's just people from our parents' generation that aren't.”

From the Olympian heights of international administration and inspirational commentary on the Yugoslav tragedy, one so often hears the opposite: that it's the adults who have made a mess, left a desolate field of hatred, and that only the next generation, the young, will be free to rediscover tolerance—et cetera. Tijana had discovered intolerance, fear of a mortal enemy, the primeval comfort of the tribe. “We were really traumatized,” she said simply. “My parents still have close friends who are Muslims. Most of them went overseas or whatever. But my old friends who are Muslims, who live in Sarajevo now, when I see them, it's just so awkward. We can't talk about anything serious. Every subject is too dangerous. It's quite boring, actually. And I really feel sorry for the kids of mixed marriages. They don't know who they are. They don't fit in anywhere. Mixed marriages can't succeed here anymore.”

Working as a translator for international organizations, as she often had since the war, had only sharpened her sense of Serb identity. “So many of the foreigners I've worked for have been real Serb-haters,” she said hotly. “And they aren't at all afraid to let me see it. The things they say about Serbs are *outrageous*. It's so humiliating. And these are the enlightened occupiers who've come here to teach us savages about tolerance and ethnic brotherly love.”

Tijana made frequent withering observations about the shallowness of American individualism and materialism. “Money isn't everything,” she proclaimed. “It isn't nothing, as the Communists taught us, but being with your own people, feeling like you're all in it together—as we felt during the war—is much more important than money. Real community, real culture—these are the most important things.”

Her ideas about “real culture” were elusive, though. She was a highbrow—her extraordinarily good English was only one of several languages she commanded—with a sharp ear for vulgarity. She loved “really ethno” Serb music, she said, but she loathed turbofolk. “It has no real folk elements, whereas true Serb folk music can be quite beautiful. The men who love turbofolk are what we call the Diesel type. He wears a big gold chain, drives a good, good Jeep, and he always has with him a young girl wear-

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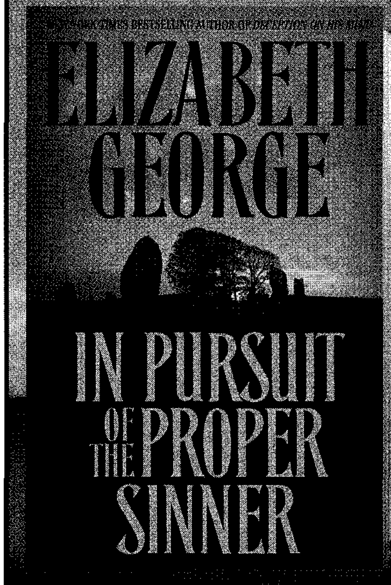
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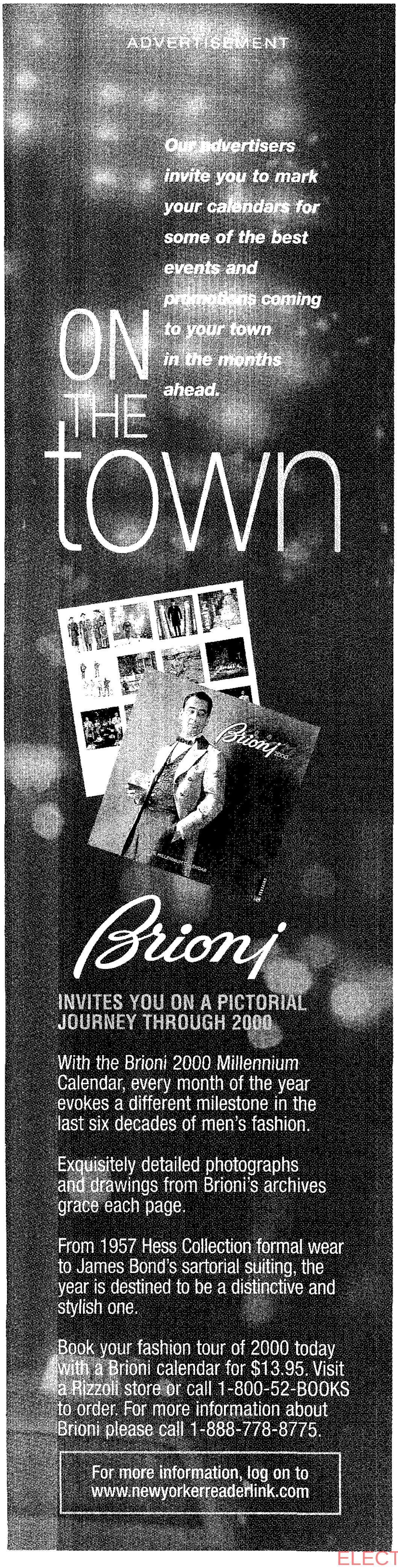
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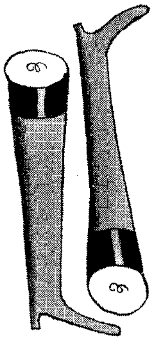
ing skimpy clothes. An upstart, actually.”

Tijana's beau ideal of a man seemed to derive from her brother's old Army unit. She and her mother had prepared huge parcels of food for the boys at the front, and when the unit came home on leave her brother would sometimes bring his buddies to sleep at the family's flat. “They were incredible guys,” Tijana said, her voice full of unfaded admiration. “All tall, with black hair, well built. Real warriors.” On another occasion, she actually described them as “mighty warriors, with mighty weapons.” She sometimes wished, she said, that she had lived in olden times, when women weren't expected to get an education and have a career, but merely to tend to the men and children of the tribe. This sounded as if she had been looking too long at the Kosovo Girl, the eponymous subject of Serbia's most famous painting: a beautiful medieval maiden—painted in 1919, in a lushly romantic style, by Uros Predic—giving wine to a wounded Serb fighter during the much mythologized battle against the Ottoman Turks at Kosovo Polje, in 1389.



Old stone Orthodox monasteries, heroic poems, candlelit ceremonies, mighty warriors, silver crucifixes, cold steel, holy wars, noble death—Tijana the lover of Wordsworth and Shelley had fallen in love with these things, too.

I later asked her how she felt about the idea of rebuilding the Ferhadija Mosque. She was against it, she said nervously, knowing I would be shocked. “It was beautiful, but it was a symbol of five hundred years of Turkish oppression. It would be a mistake to rebuild it now. Certainly not in the center of town. Maybe somewhere more discreet.”

I decided not to argue. We had already had several arguments, and Tijana had learned to end them in her favor by abruptly saying, “Well, of course, these are only the opinions of a wild, half-civilized Serb girl.”

The resurgent nationalisms of ex-Yugoslavia are not finished colliding. Greater Croatian and Greater Albanian irredentism may, in the end, actually be more successful movements than their Serbian counterpart. For now, however, the raging fount of regional instability remains Serbia. Milosevic—internationally isolated, politically unpopular, with his economy flattened, his Army restive, even some of his longtime business cronies showing signs of bolting, and the opposition threatening to call a general strike if he does not resign by September 21st—is clearly in need of a new crisis, a new enemy. And his formidable ability to call upon Serbs' fears, national myths, martial traditions, and sense of righteous victimhood has been amply demonstrated over the past decade.

And yet modern Serb nationalism, for all its violence and florid romance, is probably best understood not as a matter of medieval sagas and national necrophilia but simply as an unusually tortured effort to consolidate a state among the ashes of Communist Yugoslavia. Kosovo means a lot to ordinary Serbs, but the struggle over Kosovo has been primarily over the size and nature of the post-Yugoslav Serbian state. The same may be said of the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. Modern Serbian power reached its zenith near the end of 1992, when the Serbs controlled seventy per cent of Bosnia and a third of Croatia and still had a solid hold on Kosovo. The Serbian empire has been shrinking steadily ever since. Montenegro's departure will likely be the next paroxysm.

The parallels between Milosevic's Serbia and Hitler's Germany have often been overblown, but one similarity may be worth noting. Both dictators raised alarms about alleged threats to their ethnic brethren living in neighboring countries. In both cases, these threats were fictional, but they made good pretexts for starting wars of conquest. Then, when the fighting was over, those alarms became, paradoxically, justified. In postwar Eastern Europe, nobody wanted to live next to Germans, and long-established German-speaking communities were expelled, often brutally, from countries including Tito's Yugoslavia. The Serbs have been going through the same thing on a smaller scale. Many are hanging on in Outer Serbia, but nobody wants to live next to them now. Both Inner and Outer Serbia are awash with refugees. Few of these refugees are personally guilty of anything. All have been cursed with disastrous political leadership. ♦

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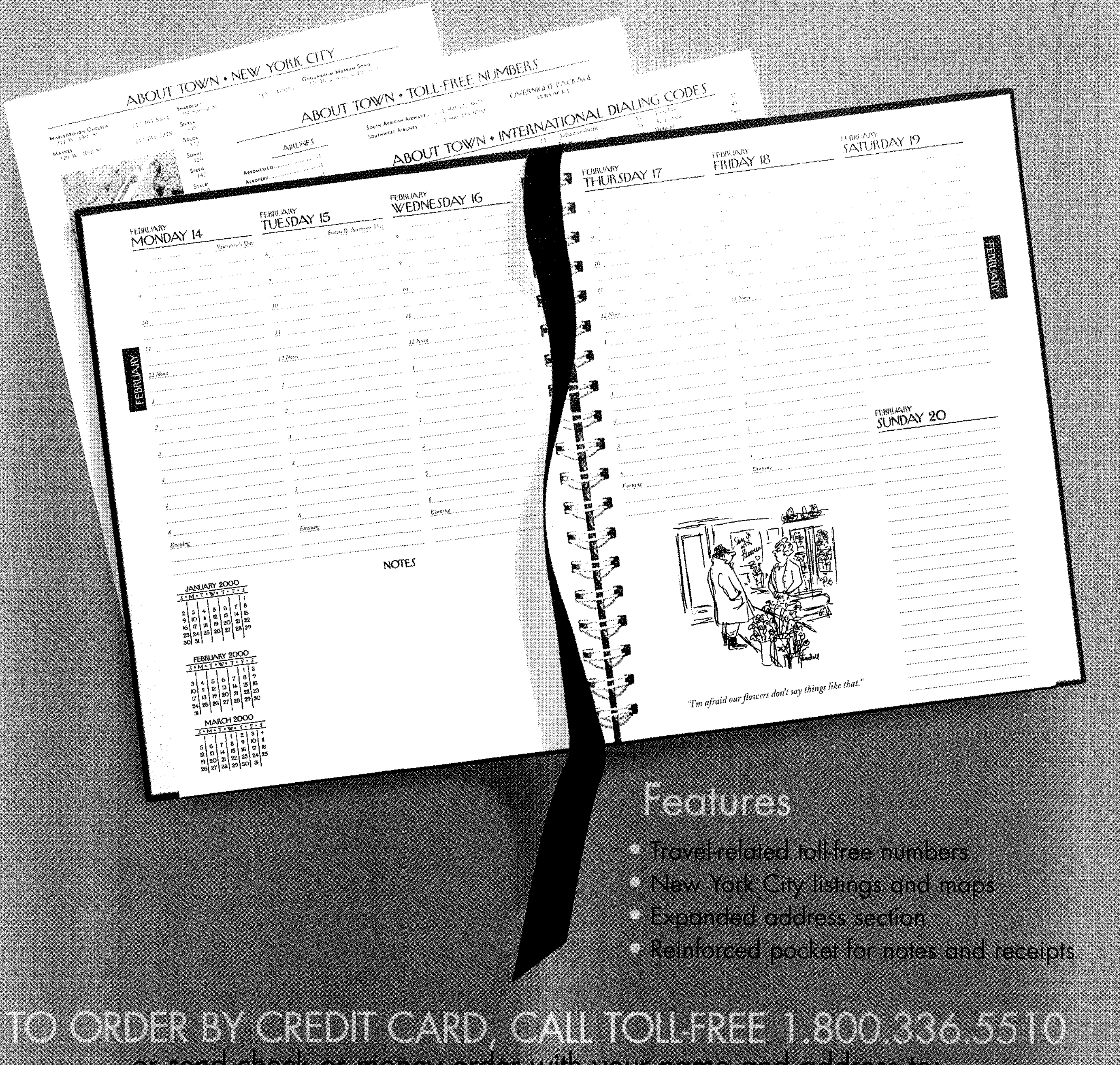
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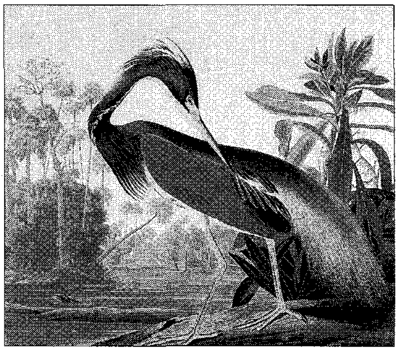

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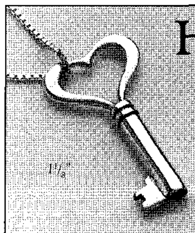

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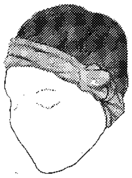

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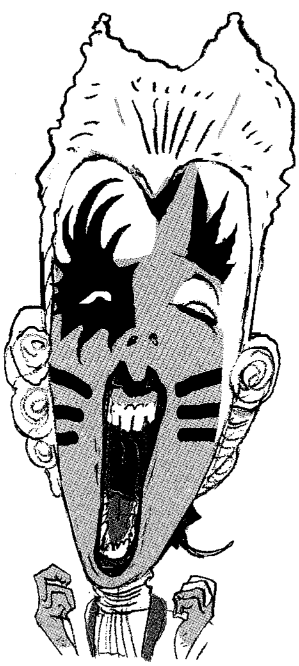
MOZART: BEHIND THE MUSIC

BY ANDY BOROWITZ


ISTVAN BANYAI

EMANUEL SCHIKANEDER, A. & R. man, Deutsche Grammophon Records: The first time I saw him, he was playing with Haydn in this club in Salzburg, and I was like, whoa, bad wig.

COUNT FERDINAND VON ZEIL, owner, Der Nachtklub, Salzburg: Haydn was totally fried that night. Bumping into the harpsichord. Accusing a roadie of stealing a vowel from his name. So Mozart loses it and goes, "Oh, sod off, Papa." And I'm like, he's only *three*? Wow.

EMANUEL SCHIKANEDER: I really had to go to bat for him at the label. I'd already blown some credibility by signing the wrong Bach. I knew if that first record didn't work it was my ass.

ANTONIO SALIERI, keyboardist: We're in the studio and it's not happening. So I go, "Let's try a fugue," and he gives me this look, like, Who cut the cheese?

CONSTANZE WEBER, wife: We were at this *kaffeehaus* in Vienna with Prince Wichnowski, Archduke Maximilian, and this Chinese chick Mei-Ying who was doing Wolfgang's feng-shui. And Wolfgang turns to me and goes, "If I ever make it big, I'm gonna buy me all the racehorses I can get."

ANTONIO SALIERI: That first tour was total insanity. Girls screaming, throwing junk at the stage. I was tuning a clavichord and I took a whalebone corset to the head.

EMANUEL SCHIKANEDER: During that tour I started hearing rumors about Wolfgang and strudel. So I asked him straight out and he goes, "No way, I'm clean." I wanted to believe him. We all did.

CONSTANZE WEBER: He gets back from the tour and finds out that his business manager put all his money into tulips. Forty-one symphonies, and he's broke. He has to sell the horses, and his chain of brew pubs. And the strudel just got worse. When you're on the road, there's always someone to bake it for you.

EMANUEL SCHIKANEDER: I remember him playing me the master tapes of his new album, and I'm freaking because it's just not there. So I have to break it to him, and he just goes off on me. I mean, rips me a new one. And I'm like, I don't care if he's Mozart—life's too short.

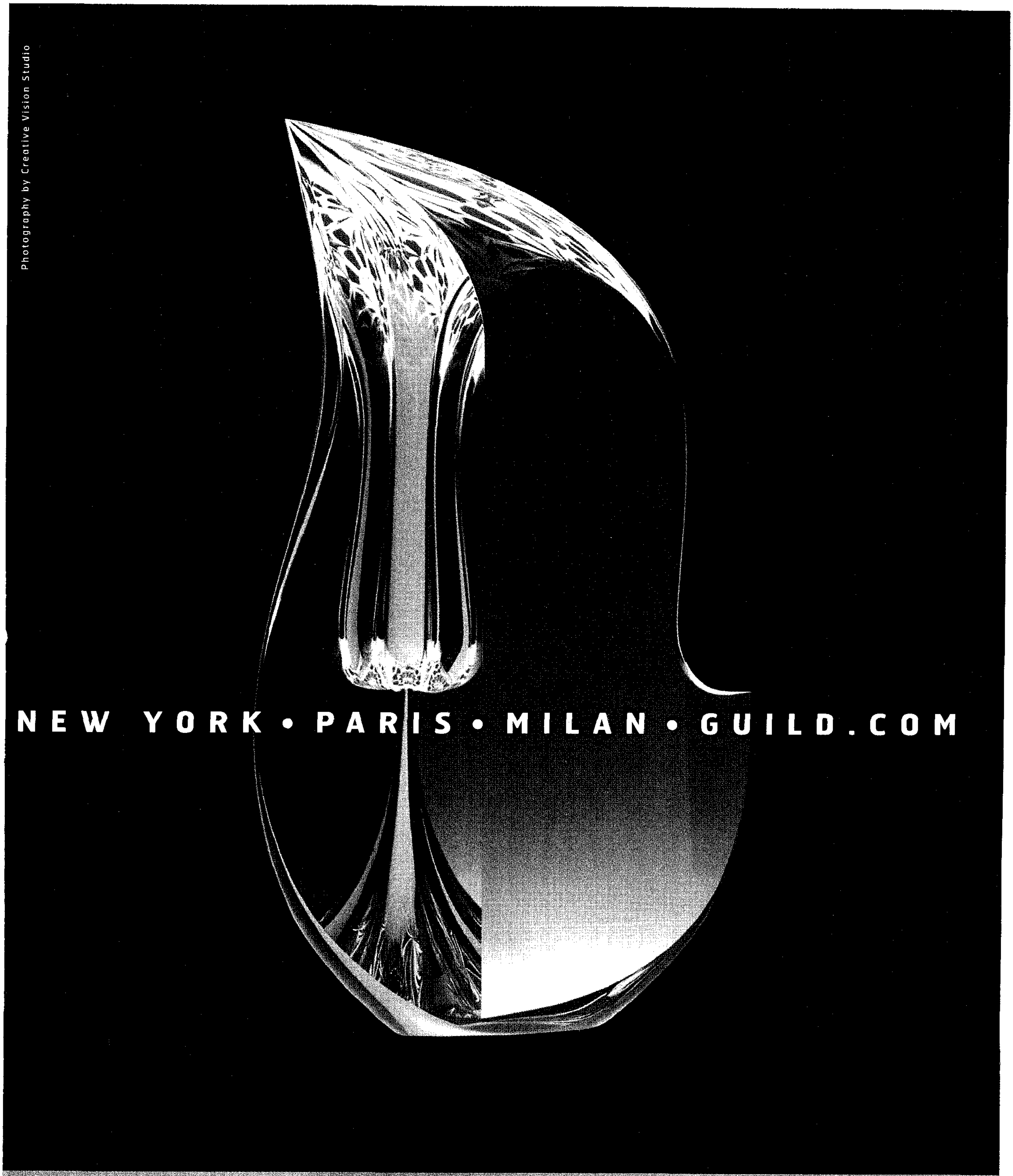
CONSTANZE WEBER: When "Mo' Nachtmusik" didn't make the charts, the strudel really got out of control. And then he did that movie, which was a mistake.

ALEC STIMPSON, director, "Wig Out!": He was always very professional on the set, eager to learn, curious about everything. I remember one time I was setting up a shot and he came over to me and said, "What's that?" And I said, "The camera."

ANTONIO SALIERI: We go back into the studio, but now this guy Klaus is hanging out with him all the time. Wolfgang said he was his personal assistant, but we all knew he was his baker. Wolfgang would disappear for hours at a time and come back all crumby.

CONSTANZE WEBER: It was terrible watching it happen, feeling so powerless. When it came to strudel, he didn't know the meaning of the words "*eine kleine.*"

EMANUEL SCHIKANEDER: I remember when I heard he had died. On one level, I was surprised, and on another I wasn't surprised at all. But I do remember thinking, Why did they let him drive the van? ♦



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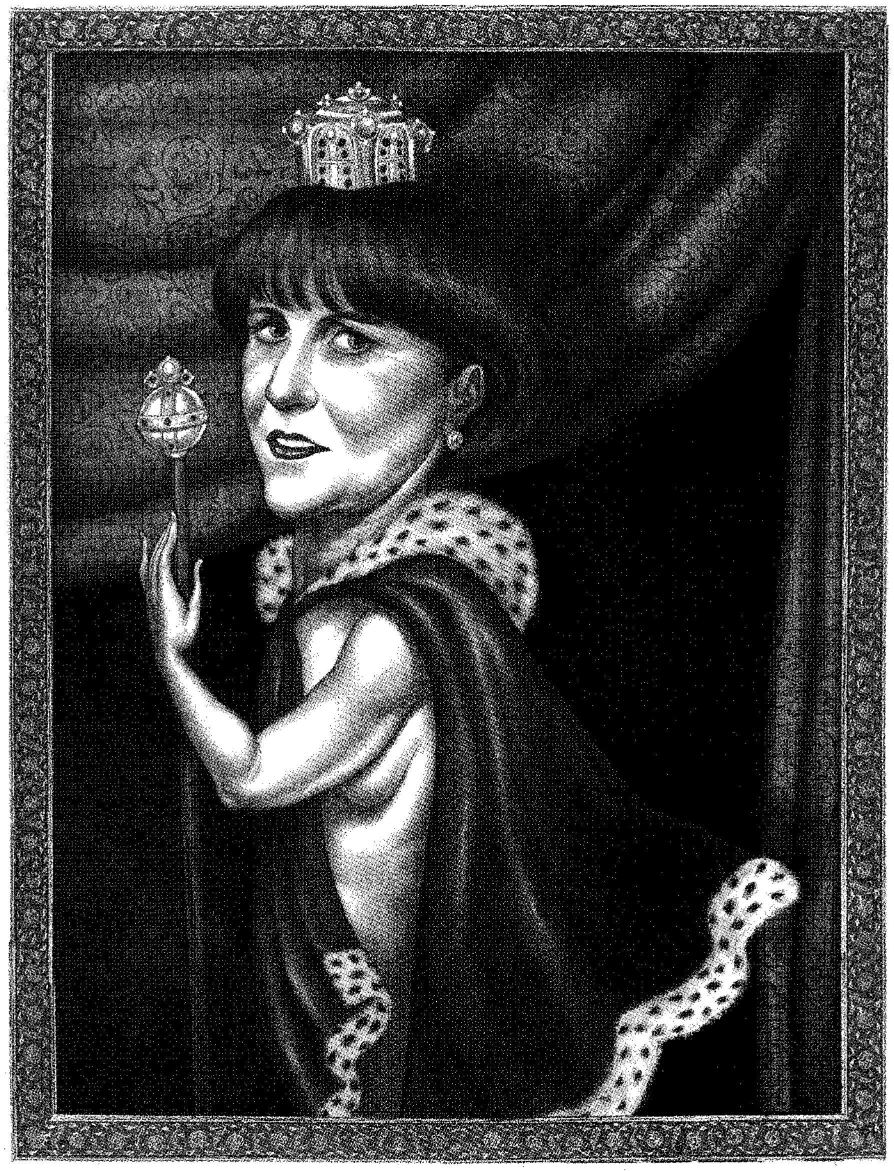
ANNALS OF THE MEDIA

ELSA'S REIGN

The woman who made fashion go global.

BY REBECCA MEAD



ANITA KUNZ

YOU would think that Elsa Klensch would have her own chair at the CNN studios, in Manhattan. After all, she has her own program, "CNN Style with Elsa Klensch." She has her own white-on-purple logo. She has been a mainstay of the network since its début, nineteen years ago. And, it must be allowed, she is of an age—all available evidence indicates that she is in her middle to late sixties—when she really does deserve her own chair.

But here she is, perched on a high chrome-and-leather stool that her show shares with the people from "Moneyline." "I must say, Lou Dobbs had longer legs than I do," she says of the recently departed CNN financial journalist as she arranges herself for the camera. Her upper body is all besuited business—the black jacket, the white blouse reflecting flatteringly on the face, the understated silver choker and earrings, the burnished brown bob. But, below, her legs dangle, her feet swinging listlessly in a pair of sensible black sandals that do not appear to come from Manolo Blahnik. It is not exactly what a fashion person would call a look.

It's a Wednesday morning, and Klensch is here to tape her standups, the spoken bits that link together the videotaped segments of her regular Saturday-morning show. Klensch doesn't really like the morning—she says she'd be happy if it could be 10 P.M. around the clock—but she's putting a brave face on it, and on that brave face there is enough makeup to kit out a house party of drag queens. Even so, Klensch seems to be not entirely happy with her appearance. "She looks a bit washed out," says John Filimon, a smallish man with a shaved head and wearing cargo pants, who is Klensch's writer and this morning is doubling as her hair-fluffer, brushing and smoothing while the two of them check her appearance in an oversized monitor. Filimon frowns slightly, and Klensch frowns, too.

But when a teleprompter starts scrolling her lines the lineaments of her face suddenly rearrange themselves, resolving into the biggest smile this side of a Viagra commercial. Klensch doesn't just say "cheese"; she gives an account of the entire contents of the Fairway dairy department.

"This is 'Style,' and I'm Elsa Klensch, reporting on the design worlds of fashion, beauty, and decorating," she says gleefully. Her light Australian accent is clipped, and her voice throaty, somewhere between Diane Sawyer's and Dame Edna's. "Today, slim, linear looks in graphic black-and-white—from Calvin Klein in New York," she continues. On the words "Calvin Klein," her feet flex, pointing outward in an unconscious, off-camera gesture of enthusiasm.

"Today, slim, linear looks in graphic black-and-white—from Calvin Klein in New York," she says again, lingering over the designer's name like a waiter recommending the chocolate soufflé.

"Today, slim, linear looks in graphic

Before Klensch, "When you thought of television, you thought of Milton Berle. You never thought of fashion coverage."

black-and-white—from Calvin Klein in New York," she says once more, this time with a hint of girlish playfulness at the end of the sentence, which seems to do the trick. She leans back in the chair, folding her dangling feet neatly on top of each other, and switches off the dazzling smile—conserving her facial muscles for the next line, something about Angela Missoni's purple-based color palette.

IT'S hard to remember a time without MTV's "House of Style," without Gucci's Tom Ford being interviewed on VH1, without "E! Style" broadcasting documentaries on the lives of supermodels ("Not content to confine herself to the world of modelling, Naomi Campbell is expanding her talents as an author"), without Sharon Dizenhuz from New York 1 showing up at the Seventh on Sixth fashion shows with a microphone and a camera and high heels. But until Elsa Klensch there was none of that. (As Kal Ruttenstein, the fashion director of Bloomingdale's, said to me, "When you thought of television, you thought of Milton Berle. You never thought of fashion coverage.") Klensch's show was the first to bring cameras to the catwalks, and she was the first television reporter who asked earnest questions about hemlines and fabrics and color.

Her formula has remained unchanged for almost two decades: she provides a daily style segment Monday through Friday, and then the five pieces are edited together and broadcast as a single half hour on Saturday and Sunday mornings. Each of these shows includes three fashion stories, featuring footage from the most recent ready-to-wear shows in New York or Paris or Milan or Tokyo; one interior-design or architecture story; and a segment that focusses on beauty or accessories.

With this formula, Klensch has created the gold standard for television fashion journalism and has brought high fashion to parts of the world where the definition of style was formerly provided by Sears or by the neighborhood mullah. "My mother lives in the Black Forest and barely speaks English, and she watches 'CNN Style,'" says Markus Ebner, a fashion publicist in New York. "Elsa makes my mother *believe* in a Versace haute-couture show." Klensch

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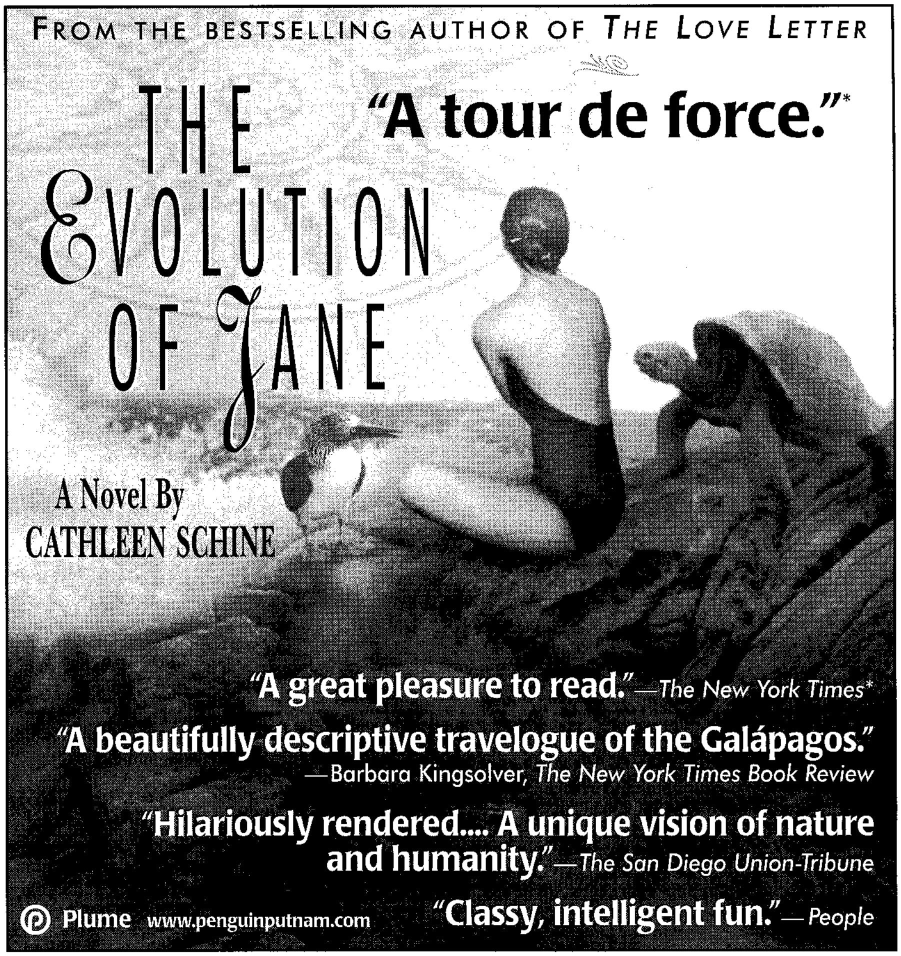

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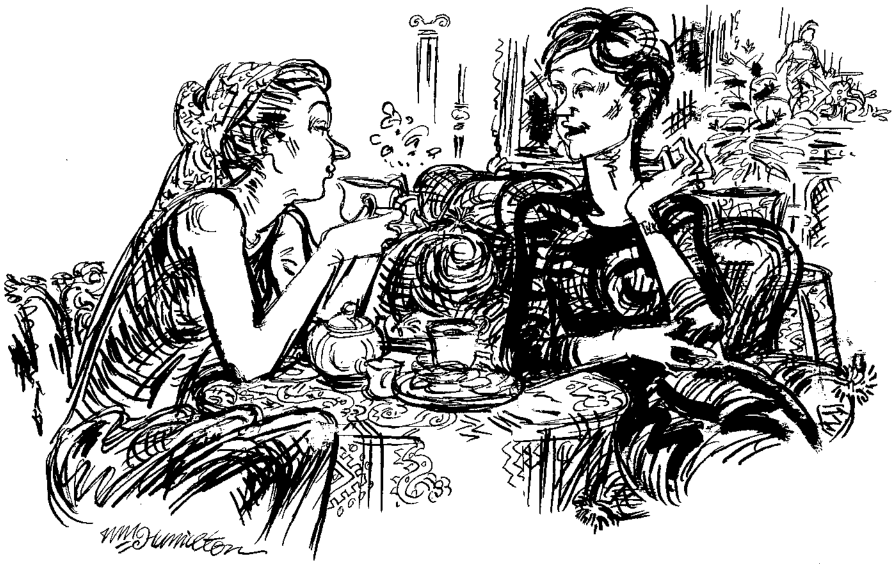

"Frankly, I find style without substance a hell of a lot easier to cope with."

• •

was the first to introduce a generation of young would-be designers to the aesthetics of frogging and the importance of double-faced cashmere. Jeremy Scott, a designer in his twenties who was the toast of Paris a few seasons ago, told me about his Kansas City childhood: "I was living through 'Style with Elsa Klensch,' and I totally lived the life of runways and thought it was for real." Because of the importance of Far Eastern markets to CNN, Klensch has brought Japanese design into the homes of millions of Westerners, teaching Americans how to pronounce the words "Issey Miyake." And, with CNN available in more than two hundred countries, Klensch has roused innumerable jet-lagged business travellers with her accounts of the latest developments in microfibre and mink. She's as globally omnipresent as Christiane Amanpour, only with fewer pashmina shawls and more hair spray.

Klensch's coverage, and the coverage offered by those fashion programs that have been inspired by hers, has had dramatic effects on fashion itself. Designers are aware that they now need to produce not just great clothes but great video. The presence of television cameras at fashion shows has encouraged designers to fill their front rows not only with the editors of *Vogue* and the buyers from Bergdorf but also with such celebrities as Melanie Griffith and Madonna and Puffy Combs, who add to the heat of publicity surrounding the collection. Because of TV, designers are now recognizable internationally, and that means that a canny designer is as identifiable as his clothes. (Consider Tom Ford, who has told reporters that he wants to be a movie director, or Isaac Mizrahi, who is planning to star in a one-man show now that his business has gone under.)

Even so, though Klensch has been instrumental in transforming designers into stars, she insists on treating them solely as creative types, and she persists in treating fashion shows as high-cultural events, *not* as pop-cultural happenings. "News is more interesting to me," she told me. "I am a journalist, and I really don't want to sit around and look at celebrities and wonder if they are breaking up with their husbands." Carrie Donovan, the former *Times* fashion editor, who is now a fixture in advertisements for Old Navy, says, "With most of the other stations, the whole thing is to make entertainment out of fashion. They just show the most bizarre things. Fashion has become like rock music, and is covered as such by everyone, and in the meantime Elsa chugs right along with the facts."

Of course, Elsa Klensch's idea of news is hardly Bob Woodward's. She reports on developments in design, on innovations in fabrics, and on mutations of hemlines as soberly as if she were covering the State Department, but, unlike a State Department reporter, she never challenges her sources. When she quizzes Tom Ford about his uses of embroidery, for example, he knows she's not going to throw in a question about whether Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy is really going to engineer a hostile takeover of Gucci. Nor is she a critic: if she thinks that a collection is bad, she will keep it off the air, but she never shows clothes just to slam them. She is like a sports reporter who loves the game and admires the players she's covering but is able to ignore it when Bernie Williams has a bad day in the outfield.

Klensch argues that it is not her job to comment on what she is seeing on the runways—that her role is merely to pass the designers' wisdom along to her audience. But, of course, this approach also keeps her sources happy and undoubtedly helps her to maintain her access, which is unparalleled. Carrie Donovan, recalling her own days of covering fashion shows, says, "We would all be piling backstage to see the designer, and everyone would say, 'Oh, God, Elsa's got him.' "

Designers adore Klensch. When I was at Calvin Klein's showroom with her one recent afternoon, I asked the designer about her. Klein, who is usually very reluctant to talk to the press, grabbed my hand, dragged me to a quiet corner, and cheerfully enumerated her virtues for the next twenty minutes.

"Her show is a designer's dream, because this is a way to communicate my message through Elsa, without any misinterpretation," he said. "The way that she set up the program at the beginning was to inform people—and the truth is, who knows more about what they have created than the person who created it? It is a no-brainer, but why is Elsa the only one who does it? Others *review*, they *theorize*, they *criticize*"—Klein's tone was dismissive—"but they really tell you more about themselves than about what you are seeing."

Klensch has an indefatigable enthusiasm for fashion and design. One day, I asked her if she ever got bored with asking the same questions again and again.

"Of course, I would get bored if it *was* the same thing all the time," she said. "But there is always something different. There is always a trend going out or a trend developing. I interviewed a man not so long ago, and he said to me that for spring-summer next year something like eighty-five per cent of the shoes will be sandals or mules. The pump is dead, in other words.The good old pump! Now, to me that is an enormous trend. I'm sure the pump is not completely dead, but the fact that people really want comfort is a trend. And he said that this is not just developing in the spring but in the fall as well. People don't want to go to the trouble of putting on a pair of shoes. Which is extraordinary, isn't it? So there is always something that is completely fascinating. It is another example of people getting away from formality. Fashion really does reflect the world—life as it is being lived at the moment—so that is what keeps me going."

HERE is newsgathering, Elsa Klensch style:

We are in a warehouse on the edge of Manhattan's meatpacking district, where Marc Jacobs is showing his menswear collection for spring-summer 2000. Klensch is wearing a long, loose black shirt, black pants, and black-and-white sling-backs; she looks safely sophisticated and comfortable, as if she were about to check into business class for an overnight flight to London. She is accompanied by John Filimon, who stands by her side and scrawls notes on a pad; by her longtime producer, Nick Glasser, who looks hot and bothered in the ninety-plus heat; and by a cameraman and a soundman. (The cameraman grabs her for a quick fashion consultation. "I need to buy some sandals, and I was thinking of one thick band as opposed to two," he says to her, with a note of uncertainty in his voice. "Oh, yes," she replies. "That's much more this season, and next season.")

Backstage, we are surrounded by racks of pants and T-shirts and sweaters in muted colors, and by bustling fashion people getting ready for the show. Jacobs, who has taken a break from preparing the models, is wearing a washed-out T-shirt and has messy, oily hair. Jacobs, who is thought by many to be America's most talented designer today, has a likable but offhand manner; he is well known for not being particularly self-censoring when it comes to pre-

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senting a public image. He is holding a cigarette in one hand and is just about to light it.

“Try not to smoke, if you could,” Glasser says.

Jacobs looks apologetic, and sets the cigarette aside. The camera lights go on.

“So, the first collection for 2000,” says Klensch with a warm smile.

“It’s lots of expensive versions of familiar casual fashion,” Jacobs explains, summing up not just this collection but his entire œuvre. “I didn’t want to make it look too ‘fashiony.’ ”

“What are the new fabrics?” Klensch asks, her head cocked with interest.

“Some look like denim, some like cotton,” Jacobs says.

“And lots of leather?” she suggests.

“Not really—I always feel that too much leather is a statement,” Jacobs says with a wary note in his voice. (A statement, it seems, is not a good thing.)

“Tell me about accessories,” Klensch says, sounding as if she were ready to eat them. Jacobs tells her how well his sneakers have been selling. She fires out single-word questions—“Color?” “Shape?”—and Jacobs responds with detailed descriptions.

Then Klensch comes in with her theme, a question around which, it appears, a “Style with Elsa Klensch” special report is being built. “What are men going to want from fashion in the new millennium?” she asks.

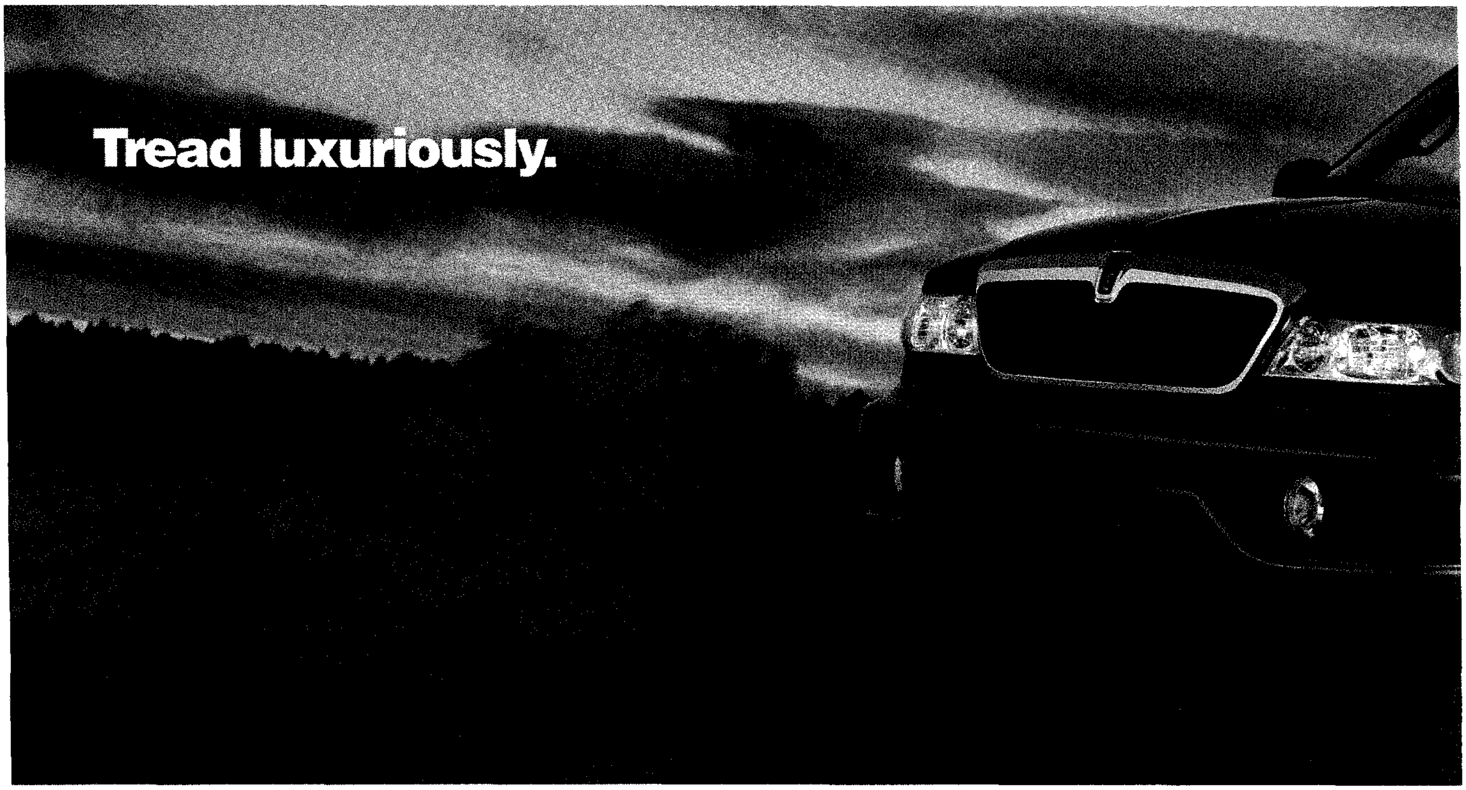
“I don’t think it is going to make that much difference,” Jacobs says, reflexively. Then, sensing her disappointment, he makes an effort to play the game, waving the hand that would have been holding a cigarette as he makes his point. “Maybe it will be possible to look at a pair of orange pants,” he says, “and just think, It’s a pair of pants, not, It’s an orange pair of pants.”

Klensch smiles encouragingly.

He pauses, unconvinced. “But that is an evolution,” he adds.

THERE is a kind of fashion editor whom it is impossible to imagine being any other kind of journalist: it’s hard to picture Anna Wintour, say, heading the metro desk at the *Times*, or Polly Mellen donning a bulletproof vest in Sierra Leone. But Klensch, in spite of the fascination with which she asks about prints and poplins, might, you figure, have gone another route. That is due partly to the fact that although she covers fashion, she isn’t particularly fashionable herself. One day, I asked her whose clothes she was wearing, and she said, “They are mine, and they are probably years old.” CNN rules forbid her to promote individual designers by name—in contrast to the editors of fashion magazines, who champion their favorites with their words and their wardrobes. If you ask Klensch whether she has always been interested in fashion, she will say, “I have always been interested in people. I can’t say that I was always interested in fashion. But, because I was a woman, I was always being shovelled onto women’s interest.”

She was born Elsa Aeschbacher in Australia, not far from Sydney, but her early working years were itinerant: she moved to England and worked on a newspaper called the *Star*, which folded in 1960; thereafter, she lived for a while in New Guinea, where, among other



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things, she edited a pidgin-English magazine called *News Belong You Me.* "I used to put a photograph of one of the Papuans on the cover, and I would go up into the highlands and hand the magazine out to the Papuans who would come to meet us as we got off the plane," she says. "And they would look at it upside down: they were so primitive they couldn't relate to a photograph of a face." She worked, too, in Hong Kong, where she did a few stories for *Women's Wear Daily* and met her future husband, an American named Chuck Klensch, who at the time was the Saigon bureau chief for ABC News. She moved to Vietnam, and they were married in 1966, in the Saigon registry office, "with bomb holes in the ceiling and barbed wire outside."

Klensch got her press credentials, but the life of a war correspondent did not appeal to her, and she used them mainly to follow her husband around as he travelled. "It was tough in Saigon, where you actually saw people being mowed down by machine guns," she says. "One time, there had been an enormous raid and the helicopter was bringing in the wounded, and there were these young men with their arms shot off, screaming for their mothers. It was my one war, and I never want to be in another."

After five months in Vietnam, the Klensches moved to New York, where Chuck gave up journalism and joined Citibank. (He has since retired.) Elsa was, she says, disaffected with the United States politically. "I was British, and the British were pretty much against the war, and my feelings were pretty much reflected in that," she says. She soon landed a supremely apolitical job, working at *Women's Wear Daily*, where she was, John Fairchild says, "very enthusiastic, and proper, and full of charm."

"I got on with it, and I learned and discovered a whole new industry," she says. The late sixties proved to be an uplifting time in the world of fashion, if not in other spheres, what with the explosion of creativity in London and the development of the sportswear market in the United States. Klensch spent seven years at *Women's Wear;* in the seventies she did stints at *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, as well as freelancing for newspapers such as the *Post.*

The big newspaper strike of 1979 was what prompted her move into television. Because there were no newspapers, local television stations started covering the fashion shows, and Klensch did some stories for CBS. Then she heard that CNN, which was just starting up in Atlanta, was looking for someone to do women's-interest stories. "I had lunch with Reese Schonfeld, who was the first president of CNN," she recalls, "and he said, 'Would you be interested in working for us?' I said, 'I really want to continue freelancing, because I am a married woman and I have a nice life.' " Eventually, though, she agreed to do the five-pieces-a-week formula, and she has stuck with that ever since.

"I thought it was going to be nothing, but it was an enormous amount of

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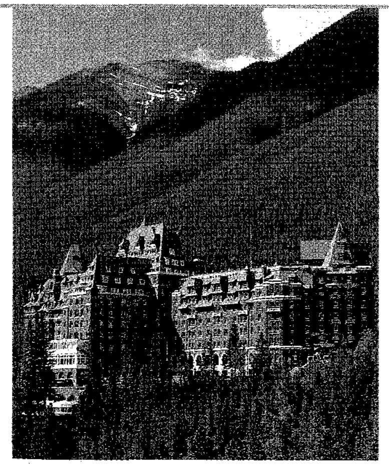

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work," she says. "We had only two crews for the whole of New York, and the cameramen didn't have any experience of shooting fashion." Neither did the fashion designers have any experience of being shot. In the beginning, CNN had to fight to get its camera into the shows at all. "I would say, 'I need the space of four seats, two front rows and two behind,' and the designers would get upset and say, 'I need those seats!' I said, 'But you'll get all this coverage.' Eventually, they understood, of course." But some designers, such as Romeo Gigli, resisted being interviewed. "He would talk to me, but he wouldn't have his face on camera, and that is a bit of a no-no in television," Klensch says. "I put up with that for a few seasons, and eventually he realized how ridiculous it was."

She became accustomed to having her own face on camera, too, and developed the expensively preserved look common among Upper East Side ladies and television anchors in the over-fifty age bracket. Recently, CNN donated its archive of "Style" tapes to the Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute, and Klensch went over there to see some of the old reels. "I think I look much younger now than I did twenty years ago," she told me over lunch the other day. "We didn't use much makeup in the early days."

A FEW weeks ago, I joined Klensch as she shot one of her home segments. In these, she showcases the work of an architect or an interior designer, and that day's subject was the architect Victoria Meyers. Klensch interviewed her in a four-thousand-square-foot loft apartment on lower Broadway, which she had recently renovated. In the front half of the apartment, there was a large living area hung with a livid orange-and-blue painting; an open kitchen on the wall of which was arrayed a series of photographs of worn-down lipsticks; and an area dominated by a grand piano. To the rear, there was a master bedroom, separated from a large den by glass walls, across which curtains could be drawn if privacy was required; the bathroom was visible from the bedroom, through more huge glass panes. It was, to say the least, an idiosyncratic home, one that begged certain life-style questions—what kind of a person wants

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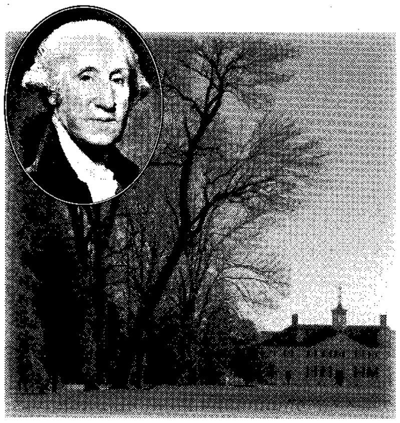
Tomorrow.



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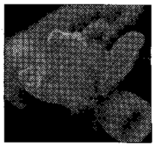

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to be able to look into the bathroom from the bedroom?—but when Meyers started to talk about the client, a young single man who is a lawyer for a software company, Klensch quickly cut in. "We don't usually name the clients," she told Meyers.

Unlike the magazine *In Style*, say, which shares a corporate parent with CNN in Time Warner, Klensch's show does not indulge in celebrity domestoporn. Instead, it is concerned with actual design. "People will often say, 'We can get you such and such a celebrity's house,' " she told me, "and we say no, because what we want is the interior designer, and his or her philosophy. I think people really are interested in good design."

There is something almost quaint about this attitude, reminiscent of the days when *Vogue* aspired to be an art magazine instead of a vehicle for advertisers. Despite Klensch's insistence that her coverage of the world of fashion is driven by news values, it is clear that another strong motivating idea behind what she does is the notion that good design and good taste are an ameliorating force in the world. Watching "Style with Elsa Klensch" is not just a way of being informed but also a means of self-improvement.

This has its own disadvantages. By bringing good taste to the masses, Klensch has unwittingly encouraged designers to venture into the realm of bad taste, too, and that can leave CNN stuck in the mud. "We are restricted because we don't show naked women," Klensch told me. "It is a family network, and we also go to Muslim countries, so we are restricted in that sense as well. It has been a big problem, because there has been such an enormous interest in transparency. We were held back from broadcasting quite a few collections about two summers ago, because there weren't enough decent clothes to show."

But, I suggested, since transparency was the news, shouldn't CNN have been showing it?

"Tell that to Atlanta," she said grimly. "I sat there at the shows and thought, Why are you doing that to us? I really dread it when those things come down the runway. And it is boring, after a while, to see naked nipples. I mean, *after all.*" Even the tireless Klensch, it seems, has sometimes seen enough. ♦

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PROFILE

AFTER SHOCK

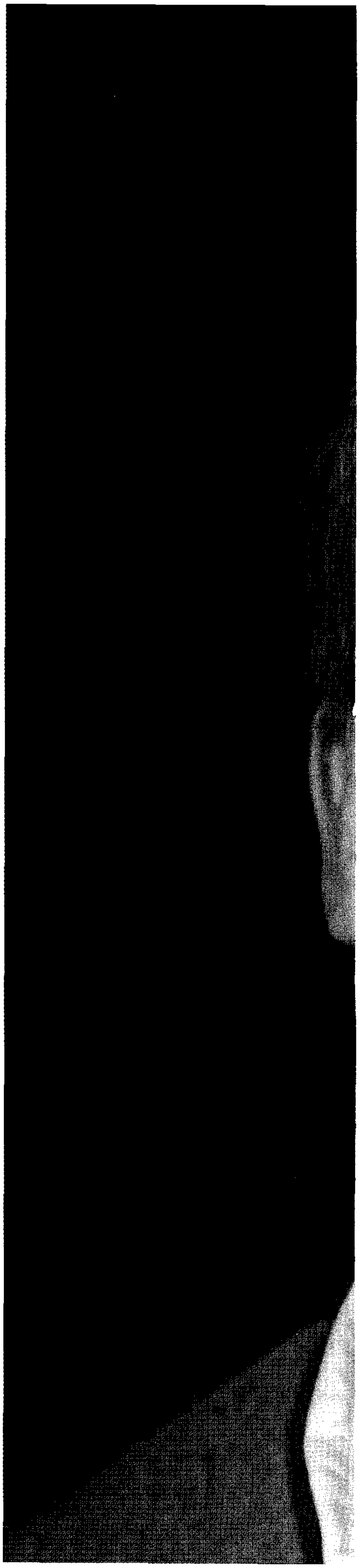
What has Damien Hirst done to British art?

BY CALVIN TOMKINS

It took Damien Hirst less than five years to become the most famous living British artist. As early as 1992, *The Independent* ran a cartoon of Prime Minister John Major submerged horizontally in a glass tank, with an onlooker exclaiming, "Oh, God! It's disintegrating!"—the reference, as the paper's readers were expected to know, was to the twenty-seven-year-old Hirst's tiger shark in formaldehyde, a real-life art work acquired the previous year by the advertising magnate Charles Saatchi. The London papers regularly report on Hirst's louche doings at the Groucho Club or the Colony Room, and they take note of the celebrities who flock to Pharmacy, the year-and-a-half-old restaurant, in Notting Hill, whose concept and décor are by Hirst, and whose profits he shares. In London, Hirst is as well known as the rock stars he hangs out with, but fame has not yet singed him with its dragon breath. Now thirty-four, he is an open, friendly, humorous, quick-witted, dirty-minded, hard-drinking, immensely likable Yorkshireman whose tough, working-class features look as though they could turn belligerent at some point but never do.

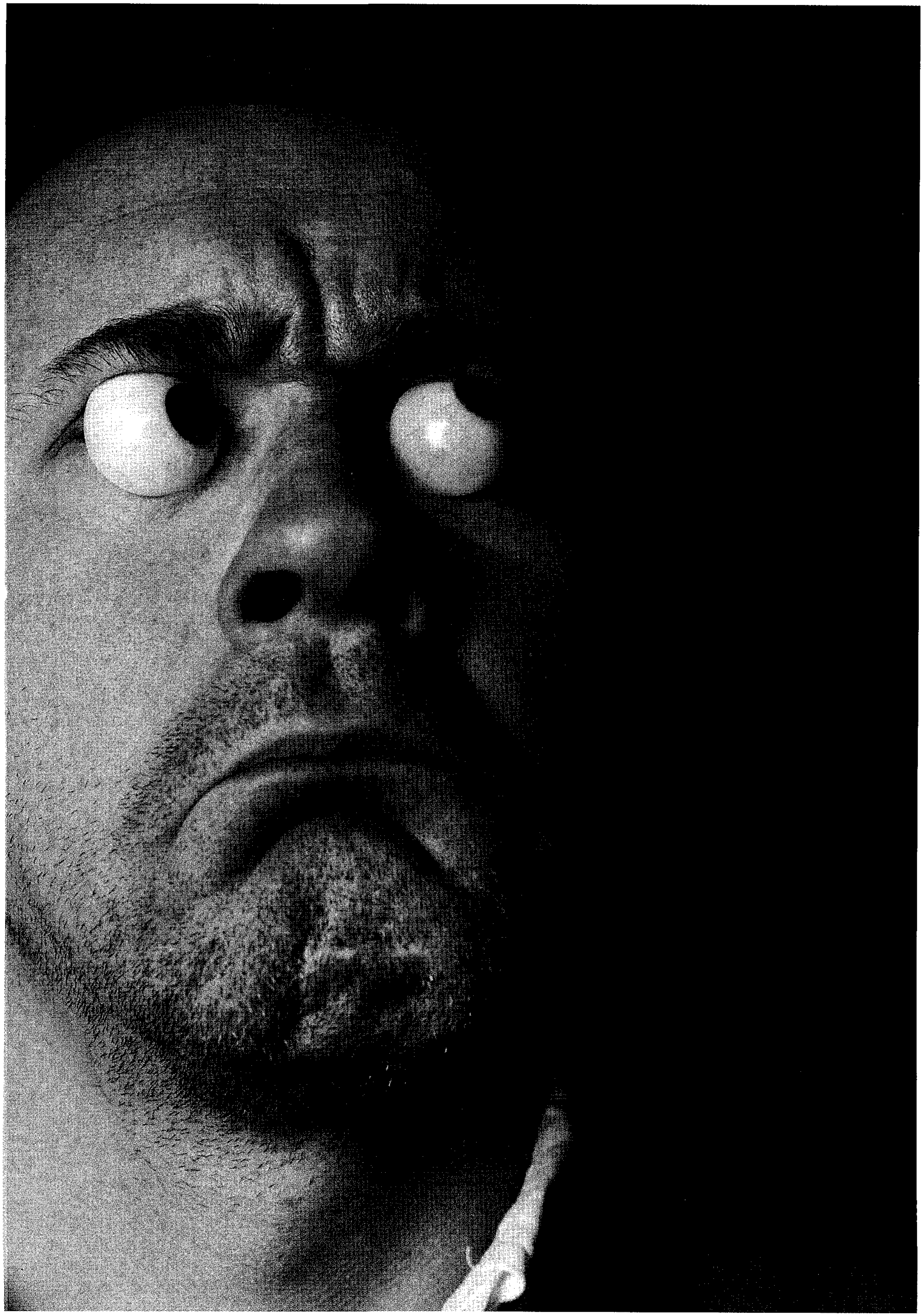
Precious few British artists make it big in New York, and Hirst, so far, is no exception. Neither he nor the other young British artists of what is known as the Freeze generation—after the 1988 exhibition, called "Freeze," which was organized largely by Hirst when he was still a second-year art student—have been taken as seriously here as they have been in Europe, partly because their work seems to echo the work of certain young and not so young American postmodernists (Bruce Nauman, Jeff Koons, and Ashley Bickerton, among others) who got there several jumps ahead of them. This situation may soon change. "Sensation," a large group show of recent British art from the collection of Charles Saatchi, who has been a prime factor in the group's success, will open at the Brooklyn Museum of Art on October 2nd, and, to judge from its previous appearances at the Royal Academy in London and Berlin's Hamburger Bahnhof, it should draw huge crowds and fiercely contesting reviews. "Sensation" will give New York its first look at Hirst's shark piece (whose formal title is "The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living") and at several other early works, including his creepy but riveting "A Thousand Years," a glass vitrine containing a rotting cow's head, live maggots that hatch into flies, and an Insect-O-Cutor device to zap the flies. Also in the exhibition are Marcus Harvey's notorious portrait of Myra Hindley, the convicted child murderer, painted with what look like the tiny imprints of children's hands; Marc Quinn's self-portrait head cast in eight pints of his own frozen blood; Jake and Dinos Chapman's adolescent female mannequins, which sprout erect penises and gaping anuses where one normally finds noses or mouths; and other thought-provoking art works, some sensational, some less so. Several of the "Sensation" artists are also having solo shows in New York this season—Saville and Hirst at the high-profile Gagosian Gallery. Larry Gagosian, who recently sold one of Hirst's flayed cow's heads in formaldehyde for five hundred thousand dollars, has a bad-boy image comparable in its way to Hirst's. He informed me with some pride that Damien had said to him, "Larry, everyone tells me you're a terrible person, but there's nowhere else in New York I'd want to show."

Unlike most of the other young British artists (or Y.B.A.s, as the tabloids call them), Hirst has produced a surprisingly diverse body of work. In addition to dead animals or marine specimens in formaldehyde (which he has stopped doing for the time being), he makes several different kinds of paintings on canvas: spot paintings, in which all the spots are the same



PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE PYKE

"What the hell's wrong with sensational?" Hirst shows his work in New York next month.

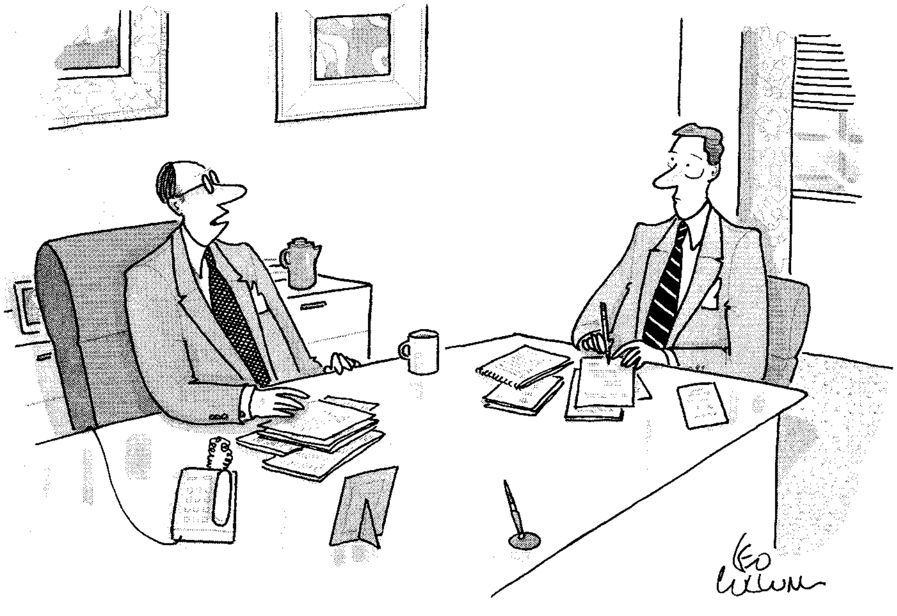


MATRIX

size but each is a different color; spin paintings, made by dripping pigments on a canvas mounted on a turntable; and butterfly paintings, made by laying exotically colored (dead) butterflies on wet canvases painted a single, all-over bright hue. These works are intensely decorative and often quite beautiful, an effect that Hirst tries to neutralize with the titles he assigns them—names of pharmaceutical narcotics or stimulants in the case of the spot paintings, and, for the spin jobs, titles like "Beautiful, handsome, tasteless, thoughtless, amazing, spinning, cyclone good-in-bed painting (1995)," or "Beautiful, kiss my fucking ass painting (1996)."

Sculpture is what propelled Hirst to fame, however, and his three-dimensional forms often suggest a mating of minimal art and Grand Guignol. In the seventies, some formalist critics used to complain that minimal art, by inviting the viewer to create a scenario from simple, machine-made objects, was too theatrical. The "theatre" of Donald Judd or Dan Flavin, however, with its spare metal boxes or fluorescent-light tubes, looks pretty tame next to Damien Hirst's "A Thousand Years" (the fly piece) or his 1992 "She Wanted to Find the Most Perfect Form of Flying," a large steel-and-glass enclosure whose walls and floor are drenched with what looks like blood and whose contents include a spotless white lab coat on a hanger, a blood-spattered chair, and a three-legged table on which, amid some bloody debris, a live goldfish swims serenely in a round bowl. The scenario here is up to you, of course, but Hirst has suggested that it deals with sexuality, which "always turns into murder for some reason."

Actually, sex and violence do not figure prominently in Hirst's oeuvre. His main sculptural fixation over the last decade has been with death—or, rather, with the impossibility of death in the mind of someone who, like Hirst himself, is infatuated with life. "Death is an unacceptable idea," Hirst has said, "so the only way to deal with it is to be detached or amused." His medicine cabinets—early works in which surgical instruments or prescription drugs are neatly aligned on the shelves of ordinary glass-fronted cabinets—can be seen as supercool metaphors for the human body and its losing struggle against disease and decay. (They also refer, according to Hirst, to "the fact that people believe in medicine but don't believe in art, without questioning either.") His shark in formaldehyde, which at first glance looks alive and very deadly; his cow and calf, chainsawed in half vertically, the halves presented side by side in adjoining glass cases ("Mother and Child Divided"); his pristine white lamb (whole) floating in formaldehyde so that its hooves don't quite touch the bottom of the tank ("Away from the Flock")—these images, which could have been merely shocking, or morbid, or sentimental, or disgusting, manage somehow, maybe because of the distancing effect of their minimalist steel-and-glass containers, to engage our attention on other levels, not excluding the visceral, populist level that Hirst himself often has in mind. "A lot of people think art's weird and stupid," he told me. "I want to get to those people, get them to come in and go *'Arrrgh!'*" Whether or not his work is merely sensational, as some critics maintain—shock for the sake of shock—his sculptures are hard to forget, and the best of them are carried off, like Andy Warhol's iconic works, with the panache of a master showman. And, anyway, Hirst wants to know, "What the hell's wrong with sensational?"

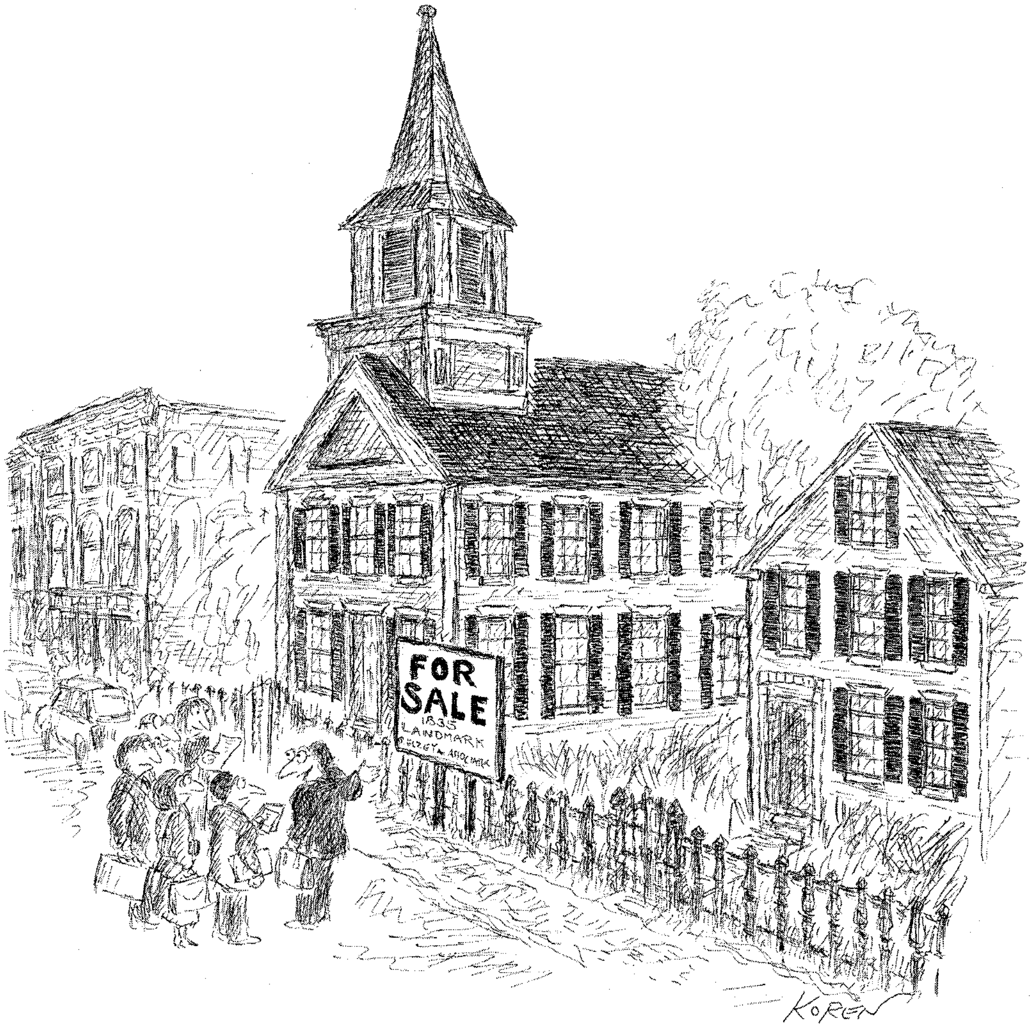


"We've got at lot of deadwood in this firm, Crawford. Let's give it back to the community."

ONE evening last June, Hirst said to me, "I think art has always been interested in extreme things. Death is frightening. If you don't think about it, then it's going to get the better of you. I'm just trying to say, 'Look, how about this?'"

We were sitting in the kitchen of Hirst's three-hundred-year-old farmhouse, in Devon, at the time, finishing a very good dinner cooked by Hirst (whom nobody can be around for ten minutes without calling Damien), after a two-hour train trip from London followed by a forty-five-minute taxi ride from the station. Connor, Damien's four-year-old son, was playing happily and a bit noisily on his father's lap. Maia Norman, Damien's companion and Connor's mother, would arrive around midnight: she was driving one of their Range Rovers down from London, where they had spent the last few days. It had, as usual, been hectic. Damien had put in some time at his business office, conferring with his associates, Hugh Allan and Jude Tyrrell, about current projects and activities. These included "Milly," a millennium fireworks rocket engineered and designed by Damien, to be manufactured by a Chinese firm and sold in department stores for twenty-nine pounds apiece; Beagle 2, the British space probe, which plans to use a small Damien Hirst spot painting as a "test card" for instrumental calibrations during the European Space Agency's mission to Mars, in 2003; and a television documentary on the history of meat, for which Damien had been asked to be the narrator.

Of more immediate concern were Pharmacy's belated first-anniversary celebration, a lunch for two hundred invited guests at the restaurant on June 5th, and the plans for the restaurant's new annex—a shop (called Outpatients) to sell take-out dishes and Hirst-designed paraphernalia. Damien had also checked on the progress of his ten assistants at two London studios, and he had done a great deal of convivial drinking and snooker-playing at the Groucho Club, the popular Soho hangout for media, entertainment, and art-world luminaries, where the sort of drunken antics that Damien and his mates fancy are not only tolerated but tacitly encouraged.



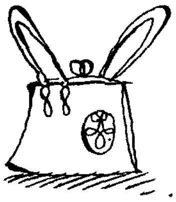
"Great for worship then! Great for retail now!"

• •

Damien, on his last night in town, had arranged a dinner party at Pharmacy for Matta, the eighty-seven-year-old Surrealist painter, whom he had just met the previous evening. Damien had not gone to bed at all that night but had moved on from Pharmacy to the Groucho and several other drinking clubs with Maia and Mary Brennan, his mother, who lives in a cottage adjoining their Devon house and helps look after Connor, and who doesn't at all mind staying up late when she comes to London. After dropping Mary and Maia off around 3 A.M., at a houseboat on the Thames which is now their London living quarters, Damien had continued on his own, God knows where. By the time he showed up for the anniversary lunch at Pharmacy, around two the next afternoon, he looked pretty wasted—unshaved, clothes rumpled, eyes half shut. He had a few drinks, sambucas and Ricard pastis. (Damien likes to mix things up, alcoholically.) He wasn't being coherent, but this didn't interfere with the carnival of affection that surrounded him the minute he arrived—friends and near-friends coming over to hug him, friends' children pulling on his arm and spilling his drink, rock musicians shouting at him across the big, bright room whose high-style décor includes several butterfly paintings, a large plastic sculpture representing an atomic structure, colorful wallpaper reproducing pharmaceutical compounds from a drug encyclopedia, and, on the stairs, dangling human skeletons and four huge pharmacist's jars filled with colored liquids. During the next three hours, as Damien continued to order, spill, and consume various alcoholic beverages, I was surprised to note that he became progressively more alert and articulate. We were scheduled to catch a six-o'clock train to Devon from Paddington Station. Long after I had given up hope that this might happen, at about five-forty-five, Damien rounded up Connor and Mary Brennan, went outside in the rain, found a taxi, and got us all to Paddington with three minutes to spare. As he walked to the train platform, carrying an exhausted Connor on his shoulders and holding his nice, cheery mum by the hand, he looked like the sort of family man you could really depend on.

DAMIEN HIRST never knew his own father. Growing up in the working-class town of Leeds, in the North of England, he got on well enough with his stepfather, a car salesman named Hirst, who had married his mother when Damien was a year old, but the marriage collapsed after twelve years and two more children, and Damien's mother (who reverted to her maiden name) concedes that by then she had lost control of Damien, adding, "which says more about him than about me." He had a few brushes with the police as a youngster, "a little stealing, minor stuff," according to Hugh Allan, who also grew up in Leeds. "We were raised on punk music and punk culture. Damien played guitar in a band, and my brother played bass."

After getting out of school, Damien hung around for a year or so, not knowing what to do with himself, until it occurred to him to go to art school. He had always liked to draw. He took the foundation course at Jacob Kramer College, an art school in Leeds. After that, he applied to two professional art schools—St. Martin's, in London, and Cardiff College, in Wales—and was turned down by both of them. At loose ends again, he got a doctor friend to let him sit in on his anatomy course at the morgue; Damien did life drawings of the corpses. "That's when I got interested in things being more real," he said. There is a horrendous snapshot of a grinning Damien in the morgue, cheek to cheek with the severed head of an elderly cadaver. In 1983, when he was eighteen, he moved to London, and got a construction job. He painted in his spare time—turgid, heavily impastoed canvases in the Abstract Expressionist manner—until curiosity nudged him into collage. "There was an old guy named Mr. Barnes, who lived in the building next to mine and collected junk," Damien told me. "After not seeing him for a while, a friend of mine and I got worried about him, so we went in through the back of the building. Upstairs, we found two rooms with about sixty years of this guy's life in there—magazines, pajamas, two hundred empty toothpaste tubes, an incredible amount of worthless stuff." Mr. Barnes never came back. The building manager was throwing everything out, so Damien began moving it into his flat. "That's what I made all my early collages out of—his stuff," he recalls. "I kind of turned into him."



Damien's mother told him he'd never get into a professional art school if he just "stuck rubbish on boards," but in 1985 his collages got him accepted at Goldsmiths' College, which turned out to be the perfect place. Goldsmiths', in southeast London, was antiestablishment, antiauthoritarian, and antihierarchical. There were no departmental divisions, and no formal teaching as such. Each student was assigned a studio and a tutor, and periodically there was a seminar where everyone's work was criticized by fellow-students and several tutors. Michael Craig-Martin, an Irish-born, American-raised artist who began teaching there in 1973, believes that Goldsmiths' emergence in the last decade as the main incubator of new British art stems in part from the profound social changes brought about in England by Margaret Thatcher. As Craig-Martin sees it, "England as a society is almost unrecognizable today, compared to twenty years ago. There used to be a sense of vulgarity about seeking success or money overtly—the English preferred to lose gracefully than to win vulgarly. But today they're as aggressive and outspoken and vulgar as they were in the eighteenth century, and Damien is part of that."

Although Craig-Martin was not one of Damien Hirst's tutors at Goldsmiths', he noticed Damien soon enough. "I remember going to an opening at Anthony d'Offay's gallery and finding that the person who served me champagne was Damien," he said. "He'd got himself a part-time stockroom job there, which was really unusual—a first-year student going right to the top place." At the end of his second year at Goldsmiths', Damien took the lead in putting together the exhibition that would largely define his own generation of artists. Year-end shows by students at the college were annual events, but this was something new. Visiting his girlfriend in the docklands area south of the Thames, Hirst had noticed an abandoned warehouse, found out who owned it, got permission to occupy the premises for a month that summer, and wangled a loan from the London Docklands Development Corporation. Hirst and his fellow-students spent several weeks cleaning the place, which was ankle deep in pigeon droppings. The show was a group effort, but Damien chose the sixteen artists—first-, second-, and third-year students, and a few who had already graduated—raised the money for a catalogue, and got Ian Jeffrey, the head of the Goldsmiths' art-history department, to write the catalogue essay. "The whole thing," according to Craig-Martin, "was a perfect mirror image of a professional exhibition."

"Freeze," as they decided to call it (as in freeze-frame), opened on August 6, 1988, and word spread quickly through the London art community that something was up. Hirst got Norman Rosenthal, the Royal Academy's director of exhibitions, to see the show by picking him up in a taxi and taking him there. The work on view in that huge, empty space did not reflect any common style, nor did the students seem to be breaking new ground aesthetically; several of the more striking pieces, in fact, clearly showed the influence of the American artists who the year before had exhibited in "New York Art Now," at the Saatchi Gallery, on Boundary Road. What struck most viewers, though, was the brash, all-out, try-anything ambition and energy of the Goldsmiths' students, the sense of youthful high spirits and bursting confidence. There were a lot of paintings in the show, and some conceptual pieces made from throwaway materials, and a couple of real shockers, like Mat Collishaw's photographic light box showing an enlarged closeup of a bullet wound in a man's skull. Among the weaker works, it was generally agreed, were Damien Hirst's collages.

At this point, a number of people assumed that Hirst was going to become an art dealer or a museum curator rather than an artist. He had a sharp eye, obviously, and a terrific talent for promoting other people's work. Rachel Whiteread, a graduate of the Slade School of Fine Art, who wasn't in the "Freeze" show, remembers with amazement how Damien used to bring Norman Rosenthal and other art-world powerbrokers to her studio to see the work she'd done. (Whiteread would soon win renown comparable to Hirst's for her ghostlike casts of common domestic objects such as chairs, bathtubs, a living room, and eventually a whole house in East London.) She had met Damien in a pub three years before the "Freeze" show, and they had liked each other on sight. "I told him how cheeky and arrogant he was," she recalls, "because he was trying to take over the world even then—and he hadn't made anything!" Damien did want to take over the world, but he was serious about being an artist. "Freeze" continued, with two extensions, through September 29th, and new artists and new work were added each time. For the third version, Damien invented his first spot paintings. He did them directly on one wall—uniform colored circles lined up in a grid pattern. The spot paintings would become Hirst's logo, the antidote to his death-and-decay pieces; since no two spots were exactly the same, the paintings were free of harmony, color balance, or any other aesthetic devices, and they all seemed to project a happy, eye-catching glow, like advertisements. "They are what they are," as Hirst once said. "Perfectly dumb paintings which feel absolutely right."

Several of the "Freeze" artists gained commercial recognition before Hirst did. A couple of London dealers bought Hirst art works from a warehouse group show called "Gambler," which Damien helped organize in 1990, a year after he got out of Goldsmiths', but nobody offered him a one-man show. Anthony d'Offay, his former employer, sent him to the Cologne Art Fair to look for new talent; he wanted Damien to start a small, cutting-edge gallery, which he would fund. When Damien asked him for some money to make a sculpture he was thinking about (it was the fly piece), d'Offay said he could have it if he agreed to do the gallery. Damien got his back up over that, and said no. It was around this time that he met Jay Jopling.

Although they were nearly the same age and had grown up within twenty miles of each other in Yorkshire, Hirst and Jopling came from vastly different backgrounds. Jopling's father had been a Cabinet minister (for agriculture) in the Thatcher government. Jay went to Eton and Oxford, where he read art history, and in 1990, just down from the university, he was brokering art deals, trying to put together enough money so that he could work with young artists. He was already working with Marc Quinn, the blood-head man, when he met Damien at a gallery opening, and then was seated next to him at a dinner afterward. "We ended up going on to a bar together and talking for hours," Jopling told me. "I'll never forget Damien saying, 'What do you like most about life?' 'I don't know,' I said. 'What do you like?' And he looked at me with those burning eyes and said, 'Everything.' "

The next evening, Jopling came to Hirst's place—a council flat in Brixton—and saw drawings and plans for a whole galaxy of things that Hirst didn't have the money to make: steel-and-glass vitrine pieces and cabinet pieces and "natural history" pieces, one of which was a tank containing a huge shark in formaldehyde. "These were all drawn in detail, by hand and on a computer which a friend of his had access to," Jopling told me. "I was totally excited. I told him that what money I had I wanted to invest in realizing these works."

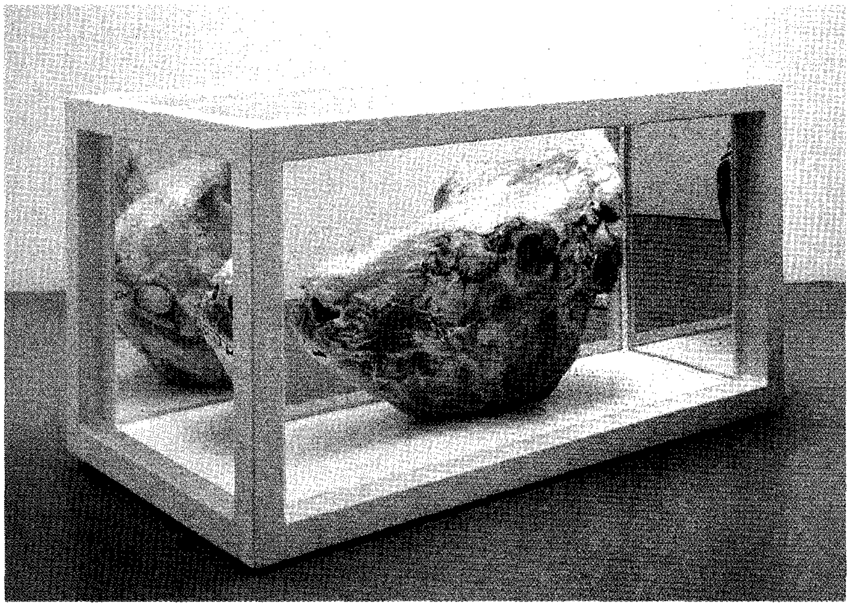
With Jopling's still somewhat limited funds, Hirst made "Isolated Elements Swimming in the Same Direction for the Purpose of Understanding," a large glass-fronted cabinet with thirty-eight compartments, each of which contained, preserved in formaldehyde, a different species of fish from the Billingsgate Fish Market. He borrowed money from friends to produce "A Thousand Years," the fly piece with the rotting cow's head, which he showed, along with some of his early medicine cabinets, in the 1990 "Gambler" exhibition. The key event in Hirst's early career was the purchase of "A Thousand Years," in 1991, by Charles Saatchi. Widely admired internationally for his keen eye and his daring tactics, and also for the museum-quality exhibitions he put on at a gallery that he had established in 1985, in a former paint factory in St. John's Wood, Saatchi had often been criticized for acting like a dealer, selling off at large profits works he had acquired for next to nothing. (On occasion, he had virtually liquidated his holdings in an artist: in the mid-nineteen-eighties, he sold twenty-eight paintings by the Italian artist Sandro Chia, doing considerable damage to Chia's reputation in the process.) Saatchi had a new incentive to sell: having shown little interest in British art until then, he was infatuated by the Freeze generation. He had gone to "Freeze" several times, and now he was buying Gary Hume, Marc Quinn, Jenny Saville, Damien Hirst, and several other Y.B.A.s. When Saatchi bought "A Thousand Years," the art world took notice. Soon after that, Saatchi bought the second version of "Isolated Elements Swimming in the Same Direction for the Purpose of Understanding." (The first version, with the fish swimming in the opposite direction, had gone to Damien's friend, the novelist Danny Moynihan.) Saatchi also put up something like sixty thousand pounds for Hirst to make his shark sculpture.

Damien had originally wanted to do a painting of a shark, but had then decided that the shark had to be more real than that. "I like the idea of a thing to describe a feeling," he said once, and the feeling he had in mind was sheer terror. He wanted to use a great white shark, of course, and he was astonished to discover that they had become a protected species. A tiger shark would have to do. "I had an Australian surfer friend," he said, "and we got out the atlas and went round the map of Australia, marking where the sharks were. He told me to write to all the main towns, saying 'Shark Wanted,' and I did, and the fucking phone never stopped ringing. I'd put Jay Jopling's number on the notice. After three weeks, we found this guy named Vic Hyslop, who had a shark museum, and he gave us a quote: six thousand pounds for a tiger shark." When the fourteen-foot monster arrived, frozen, Damien and Hugh Allan spent two weeks injecting formaldehyde into the carcass in his Brixton studio, sloshing around in a huge tank in dry suits and face masks (to keep from being asphyxiated by formaldehyde fumes). "Those were the days when I did everything myself," Damien recalls.

Shark and viewers met for the first time in 1992, at the Saatchi Gallery, in

"I'll pencil you in for recess."

a group show of “Young British Artists.” Larry Gagosian saw it there and immediately telephoned Saatchi. Gagosian wanted to buy the shark and bring it to New York, but Jay Jopling and Saatchi had other plans. Hirst and Jopling were a team, even though Jopling didn't have a gallery yet (he would eventually open White Cube, a small but highly influential gallery on Duke Street), and even though Hirst had stolen Jopling's girlfriend, Maia Norman—a dazzling blond American who grew up in California and was an avid surfer before she moved to London and became a jewelry designer. Things were a little tense after Damien moved in with Maia, but then Jay married Sam Taylor-Wood, a photographer and filmmaker who was one of the rising Y.B.A.s, and everyone stayed friends. Maia and Damien were a real match, two strong and independent personalities with no need to control or compete with each other. Maia “is like an alien to me,” Damien told me. “She inhabits a world I didn't know existed.”

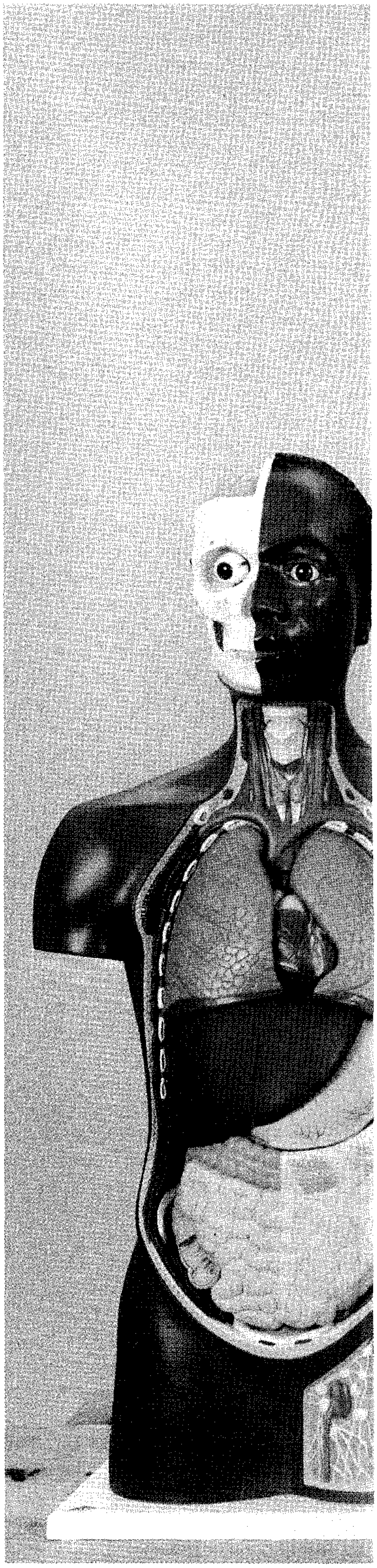


The Y.B.A.s were a competitive but remarkably cohesive group. They drank together, slept together, promoted one another's work, and welcomed talented newcomers. “Freeze”-type group shows, organized by artists, proliferated in temporary spaces around London. Damien curated several of them. “People in the art world got after me and said you've got to decide whether you're an artist or a curator,” he told me, “and I kept saying Why? If you go out and buy objects and arrange them in a sculpture, why can't you do it with art works? It's all art to me.” Although he'd had very few one-man shows, Damien was already becoming famous. The shark, the first dead-animal sculptures, the animal-rights protesters who fervently demonstrated against them, and his own bumptious, cocky personality made him seem like the driving force behind the whole Y.B.A. phenomenon, which, in fact, with backstage help from Jopling and Saatchi, he was. In 1992, Hirst was short-listed for the Turner Prize, the country's most prestigious award for artists under fifty. He didn't win it that year, but three years later he did.

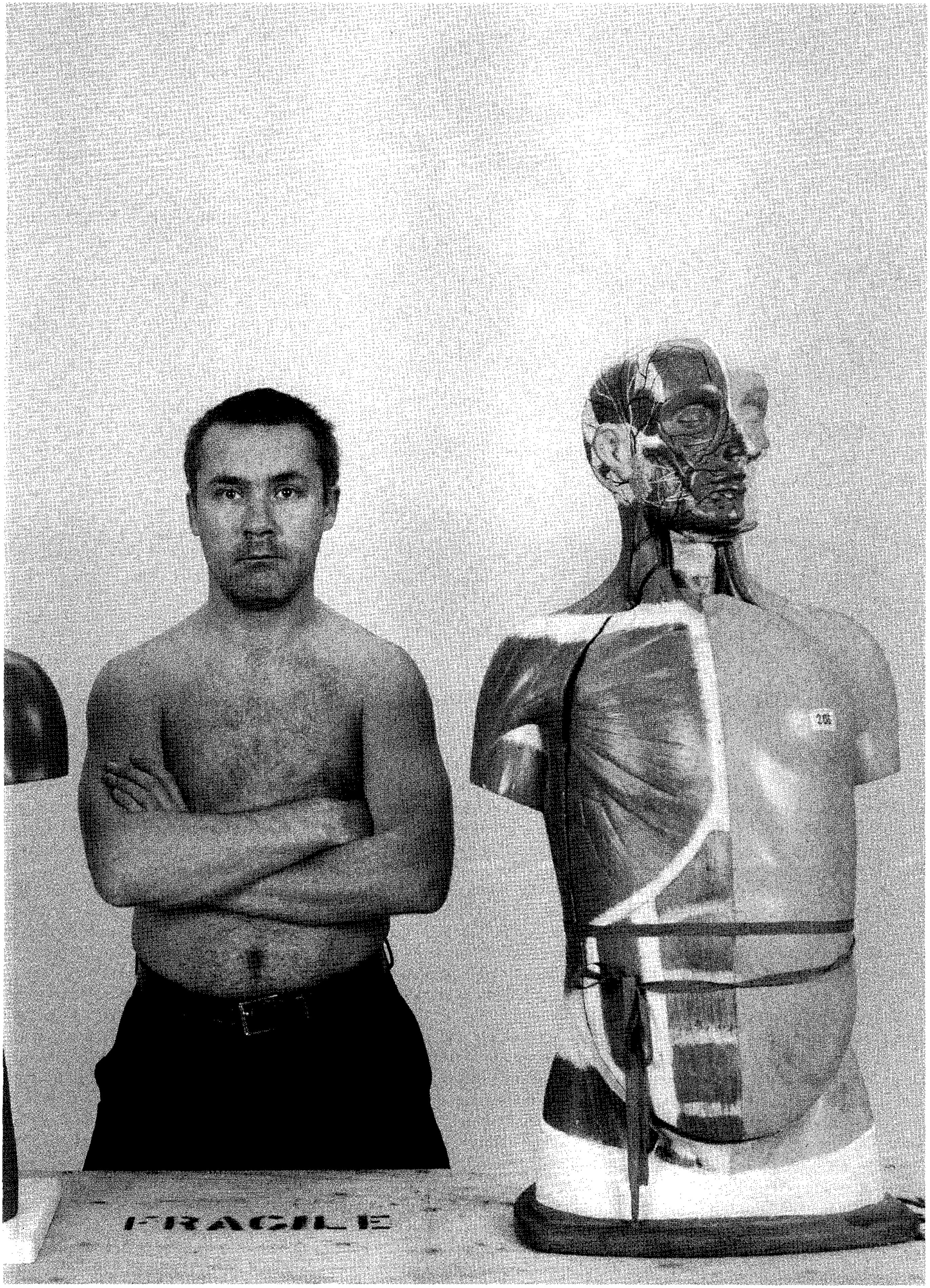
THE British seem to tolerate innovation in film, fashion, and music, but in this century they have consistently resisted and ridiculed it in the visual arts. Now, however, for the first time that anybody can remember, stories about young British artists began turning up on page 3 or even page 1 of the London newspapers. When a self-styled artist poured black ink into Hirst's lamb in formaldehyde (“Away from the Flock”), at the Serpentine Gallery in 1994, the papers all played it big; they reacted even more gleefully in 1995, when Hirst's first solo show at the Gagosian Gallery in New York was cancelled because the New York City Department of Health took issue with the sanitary arrangements for the main art work, a glass case in which cows were supposed to simulate copulation by means of a hydraulic apparatus.

Hirst's Gagosian show took place in the spring of 1996. Instead of

STEPHEN WHITE



“Matthew” (1994), left. “If



MATRIX

't think about death, then it's going to get the better of you," Hirst says. "I'm just trying to say, 'Look, how about this?' "

"I don't think it's sanitary to drink from the same footprint."

copulating cows, the main work, entitled "Some Comfort Gained from the Acceptance of the Inherent Lies in Everything," consisted of two cows chainsawed into segments, from head to tail, and displayed consecutively in tall, formaldehyde-filled steel-and-glass cases aligned so that viewers could walk between them and see their truncated innards. There was also a pig sculpture, with the pig sliced in half vertically and similarly displayed, except that one of the glass cases moved back and forth on a track, so that the pig alternately departed from and rejoined its other half. In addition, there were some very large spin paintings and spot paintings, a beach ball floating on a column of air, and a mock ashtray eight feet in diameter containing several weeks' worth of real cigarette butts from the Groucho Club. The show was an art-world event, which quite a few New York art types decided not to be impressed by. You kept hearing that glass vitrines had been done by Jeff Koons, who submerged basketballs in fish tanks in the nineteen-eighties, and that the spot paintings were too much like Gerhard Richter's color charts. Art generally comes from other art, though, and did so long before "appropriation" became a style. To me, Hirst's exhibition made everything else in New York look a little dingy. I found myself grinning a lot, and not worrying whether the stuff was really any good.

Slicing up cows and pigs from the abattoir might horrify the animal-rights lobby, but Hirst's concepts were so over the top, so full of gross-out humor, and yet so coolly executed, that the effect was hilarious rather than morbid. The work had the same qualities of cheekiness and professionalism that made it almost impossible to dislike Hirst personally. In that crowd of ambitious, highly competitive British artists, he seemed to have no enemies. Everybody mentioned his generous impulses—his urge to support the work of his friends and to buy it himself, now that he could afford to—and his irrepressible energy and high spirits. "You never switch off, do you?" Hugh Allan once marvelled. "No, never," said Damien. He was not only the leader and standard-bearer of young British art but also its court jester, buying everybody drinks and telling jokes and dropping his pants in public. ("He's always had his willy out at every opportunity," according to Rachel Whiteread.)

There were a few people who thought he was pushing too hard. In 1996, Damien made a couple of not-great videos, and he directed a short feature film, "Hanging Around," starring his actor friend Keith Allan, which his friends agreed was wooden and inchoate. David Sylvester, the dean of the London art critics, who had agreed to write about Hirst for a monograph on his work, decided not to after seeing "Hanging Around." He was "appalled," he told the publisher, "by its mediocrity, banality, self-indulgence and lack of self-criticism." At this point, Damien's life seemed to be spinning out of control, what with the drinking and the drugs and the all-night parties at the Metropolitan Hotel, where he and Maia often stayed. What brought him up short was, first, becoming a father, and, second, his 1997 one-man show of new work at the Bruno Bischofberger Gallery, in Zurich. He hadn't had enough time to get ready for the show; he was working on some sculptures up until and after they were installed, and he felt humiliated by the results. "There was something wrong with every piece in that show," he told me ruefully.

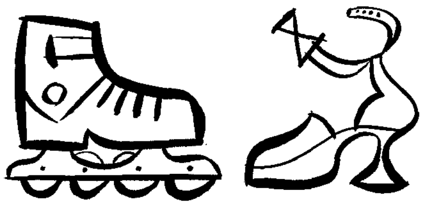
Hirst changed his life after that. He pretty much cut out the drugs, and he stopped exhibiting for a couple of years. He hired an accountant to straighten out his affairs (it was Frank Dunphy, a legendary theatrical accountant who once represented most of the circus clowns in London), and he set up an office in Bloomsbury, run by Hugh Allan and Jude Tyrrell, which they decided, whimsically, to call Science, because it would deal with Hirst's extra-art activities, while Jay Jopling would take care of the art side. Just before Connor was born, in 1995, moreover, Damien and Maia had bought the house in Devon, near the sea. "Maia said if we were going to live in the country, it had to be in a place where she could surf," Damien told me. "I didn't really want a house, but I fell totally in love with this one the minute I saw it."

These days, they spend more time in Devon than in London. Damien recently acquired the sculptor Lynn Chadwick's very large studio in Gloucester, about an hour and a half northeast of his Devon house, where he plans to do most of his work in the future. At the moment, he is doing no real art work in Devon. During the last three years, in fact, he has gone through periods of thinking he might give up art altogether. "I thought that if I put the energy that goes into art into Maia and Connor," he said, "I'd have a much better life, and I'd be more true to them and more true to art, in a way. But then Maia said something that really surprised me. She said, 'I hope you realize that I need you to be an artist.' It wasn't just her loving me and putting up with my being an artist. She needed me to be an artist. 'Hi, honey, I'm home—I've given up art for you.' And it's 'Goodbye.' Does that make any sense?" As Maia recalls it, she made that remark around the time he was getting into the restaurant business with Pharmacy. "He's far more interesting to live with when he's thinking about new aspects of life through art," she explains. "I wouldn't ever want him to channel his energy into something else."

On my last night in London, I had dinner with Damien at Mirabelle, a fashionable restaurant in the heart of Mayfair. He had brought along his friend Alex James, the bass player for Blur, which is one of the top rock groups in England. Tall, laconic, and laid-back, James is probably as famous as Hirst, or more so if you're a teen-ager. They both looked fairly respectable, in T-shirts under dark jackets. One reason Damien had brought Alex along, I sensed, was that he'd had enough of being interviewed.

Damien was in terrific form, revved up, full of mischief. He had just settled a running feud with Marco Pierre White, the chef, over some art works in Quo Vadis, one of White's many London restaurants. Damien had lent the works—by himself and by other artists in his private collection. The restaurant was closed for renovations, and the works had been returned to Damien, but there were two spot paintings on mirrors near the bar which White had said were not being returned. Damien had been much annoyed, earlier, to read a newspaper story in which White bad-mouthed his art, and said that he was making his own spot paintings on weekends. (White, who also grew up in Leeds, is famously belligerent.) Damien had told Hugh Allan to go over to Quo Vadis and smash the spot-painted mirrors with a hammer. Frank Dunphy and others intervened, though, and the crisis blew over. (The spots were cleaned off the mirrors.) Marco Pierre White, in fact, was treating us to dinner at Mirabelle, which he also owns. Damien instructed Alex to order a very expensive red wine.

Damien talked about his upcoming show at Gagosian. "It's going to blow everyone away," he said. "There'll be a lot going on, a lot of noise—there's one piece with a chain saw coming out of a chair. The self-portrait might be in the show, and it might not." He was referring to a vitrine sculpture he's working on, called "Concentrating on a Self-Portrait as a Pharmacist": it has an easel set up in it, facing a mirror with "I Love You" scrawled on the glass in lipstick. Damien, who often says he really wants to be a painter but doesn't know how to deal with the "void" of deciding what to paint, told me he might "put on a lab coat and do a painting of myself" to go on the easel, but he added that he doesn't "have a clue how to begin. I'm hoping I can do it. I've been doing sculptures but thinking about painting, so maybe I'll just put them together." He is working on about twenty new sculptures for Gagosian, who will show them simultaneously in his New York and his Los Angeles galleries next spring. No animals in formaldehyde this time—the pieces I saw at the studio were mostly steel-and-glass vitrines containing enigmatic arrangements of objects: two shrouded cadavers (simulated, one assumes) on gurneys, entitled "Adam and Eve Banished from the Garden"; a skeleton on a glass cross, with bouncing Ping-Pong balls for eyes—objects intended to make the viewer "do a lot of work and feel uncomfortable," as Damien puts it. His assistants are also working on four of the biggest spot paintings yet—each one is forty feet long, and one has eighteen thousand spots.



At dinner, Damien said, "I also want to do a chicken in formaldehyde, in an unlimited edition. A prepared chicken. It will look just like the kind you get in supermarkets, all trussed up. We'll sell it at Sainsbury's. I'm interested in mass market." He and Frank Dunphy have set up a company to sell unlimited Hirst art editions. "It's called 'Other Criteria,'" Damien told me, "after a book by Leo Steinberg."

Edging closer to interview mode, I asked him whether he had an ideal viewer in mind. "Yes," he shot back. "Saturn devouring his children." Served me right, I thought.

Main course done, Damien and Alex ordered sambucas and made "sambuca vapor lockers," which involved lighting the liquor, clamping a palm over the glass to form a vacuum, and sucking out the fumes. A man and a woman at the next table watched with interest, so Damien ordered sambucas for them, too, and clamped his hand over the woman's glass for her when she couldn't get it right.

After dessert, the headwaiter suggested that we take coffee in the bar, because our table was needed. Damien seemed agreeable, but in the bar he dropped his pants; he stood up in the middle of the room (which was rather dark), and let them fall to the ground and then pulled them up. It didn't seem to me that anyone noticed—perfect timing or British sang-froid.

In the taxi, later, Damien had the driver stop so he could get some cash at a money machine across the street. He moved in close behind a well-dressed man who was doing the same thing, and growled, "Give me your money." The man jumped, whirled around, and started laughing. Back in the cab, Damien and Alex sang, and Damien told bawdy jokes. "Fame is hard to deal with," Damien said at one point, "but I have my mates who are more famous than me." He got out his cell phone and called people: Maia in Devon, Jay Jopling ("Hello, darling, I love you"). He took us to his houseboat at Cheyne Walk, and peed off the bow, while the taxi waited. Then he and Alex were off again, to a meeting with Marco Pierre White at Quo Vadis, and I asked to be dropped off at my hotel. Just before leaving them, I think I heard him say, "Art, love, and God—they're dumb words, and probably the dumbest is art. I don't know what it is, art. But I believe in it, so far." ◆

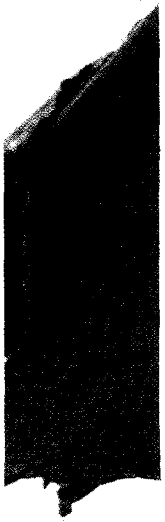
NOW AND ZEN

PORTFOLIO BY HERB RITTS

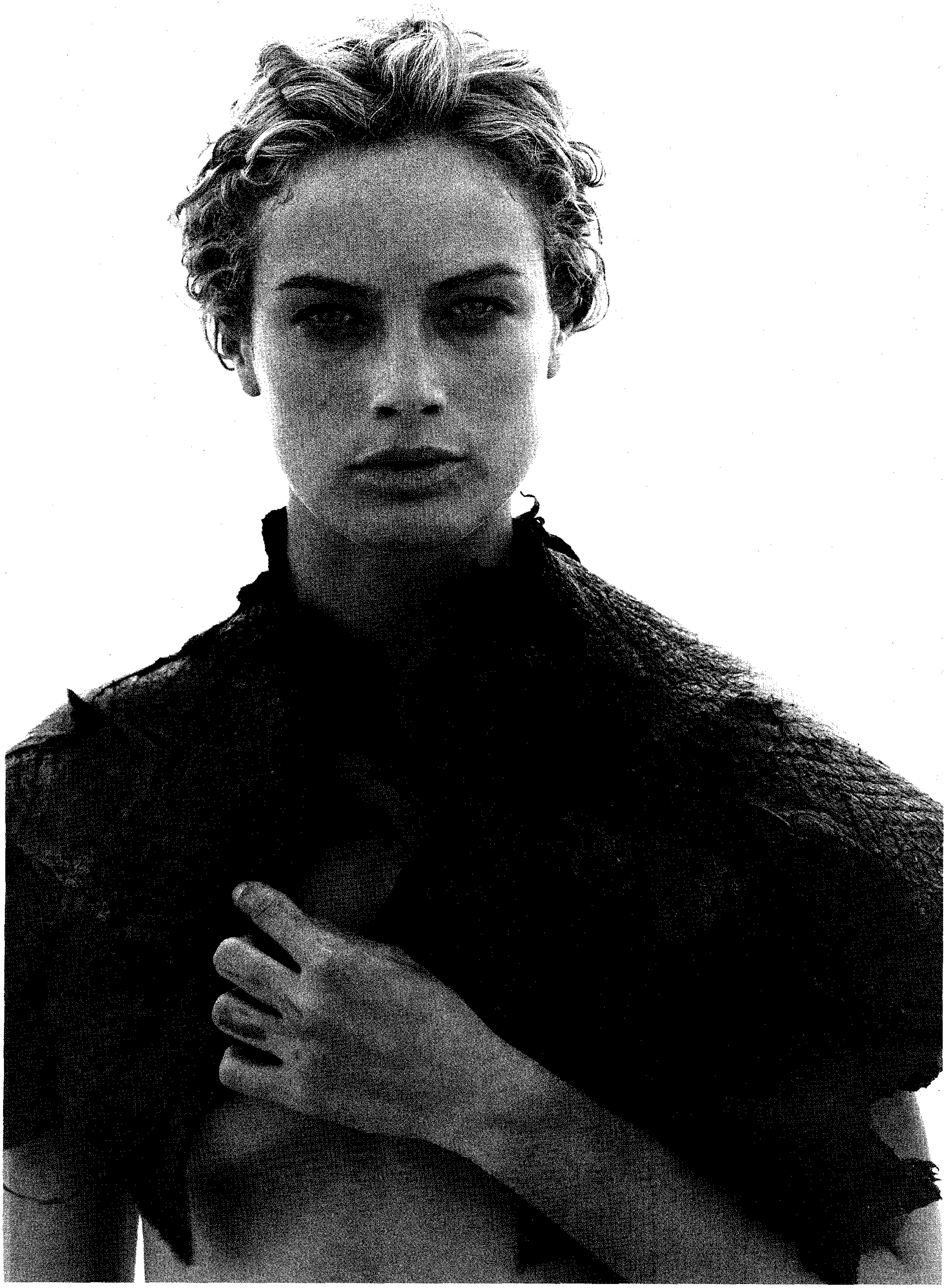
SHOPPING for clothes is always something of a trek. And, this season, trailing through the city's old-line department stores is more than ever like pioneering: amid the ephemeral trends of fall, 1999—the *sportif* nylon car coats, the over-embellished neo-bohemian slip dresses, the stacks of pitifully thin cashmere sweaters, the seventies-redux boots—are raiments that can hardly be considered merely retro. They hark back much farther, to a time when Madison Avenue was bare of boutiques and Spring Street actually fed a spring. The look, as fresh and ambitious as the new century, marries rawboned Early American settler to raw-edged Japanese trendsetter.

Consider the high-fashion suggestions on the following pages, which have been lately seen on racks at Bergdorf's and Barneys but would be equally at home emerging from a pond or nestled in a snowdrift: rough-edged, ravaged, tattered descendants of Dior's New Look suits; frisky hats like sparrow's nests, like fish skeletons, like pebbles; the deliberate undermining of line, the sabotaging of seam, the gleeful subversion of a hundred years of hemming and tucking and ruffling and buttoning. In their stead comes a resurgence of the simplest garment: a jaunty blanket with a head-hole, oblivious of gender, blind to age, to season, to the curves and strains of an individual body—the outfit in which the largest proportion of the world's people greeted the previous millennium. ♦

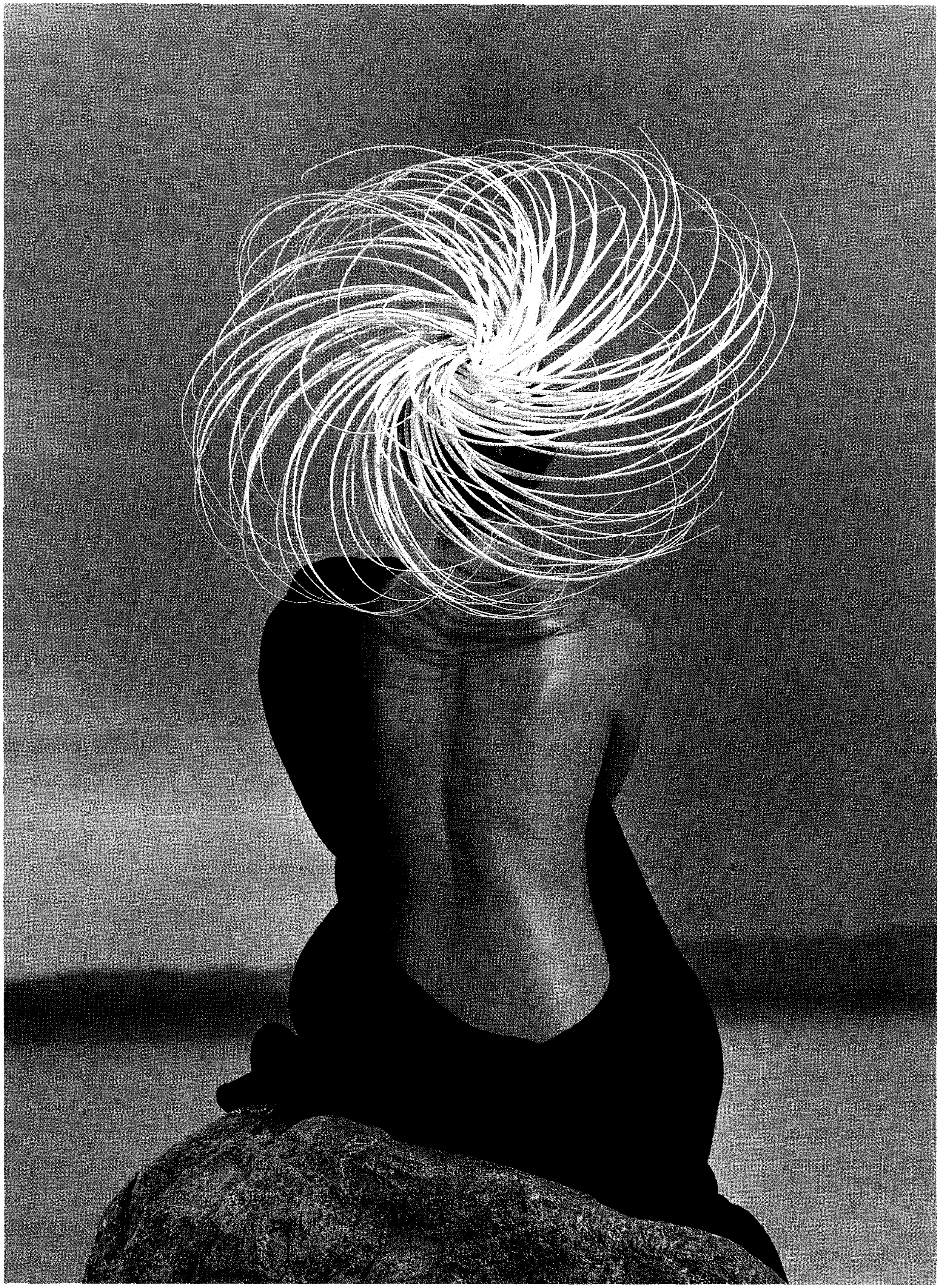
STYLED BY MICHAEL ROBERTS



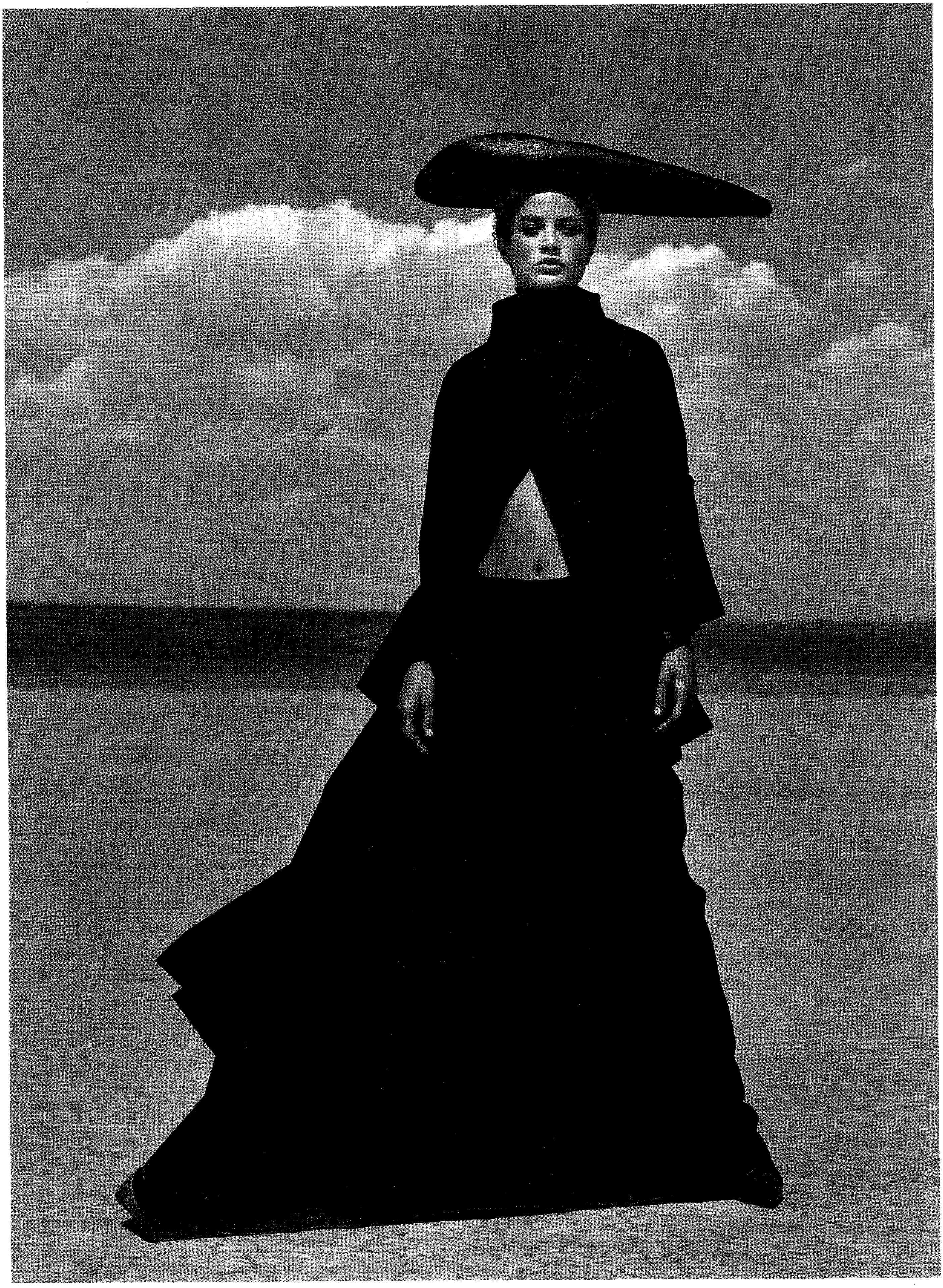
Left: An escarpm



ats in banana-leaf fibre by the Welsh milliner Dai Rees. Above: A capelet in turkey leather by the Belgian designer Ann Huybens.

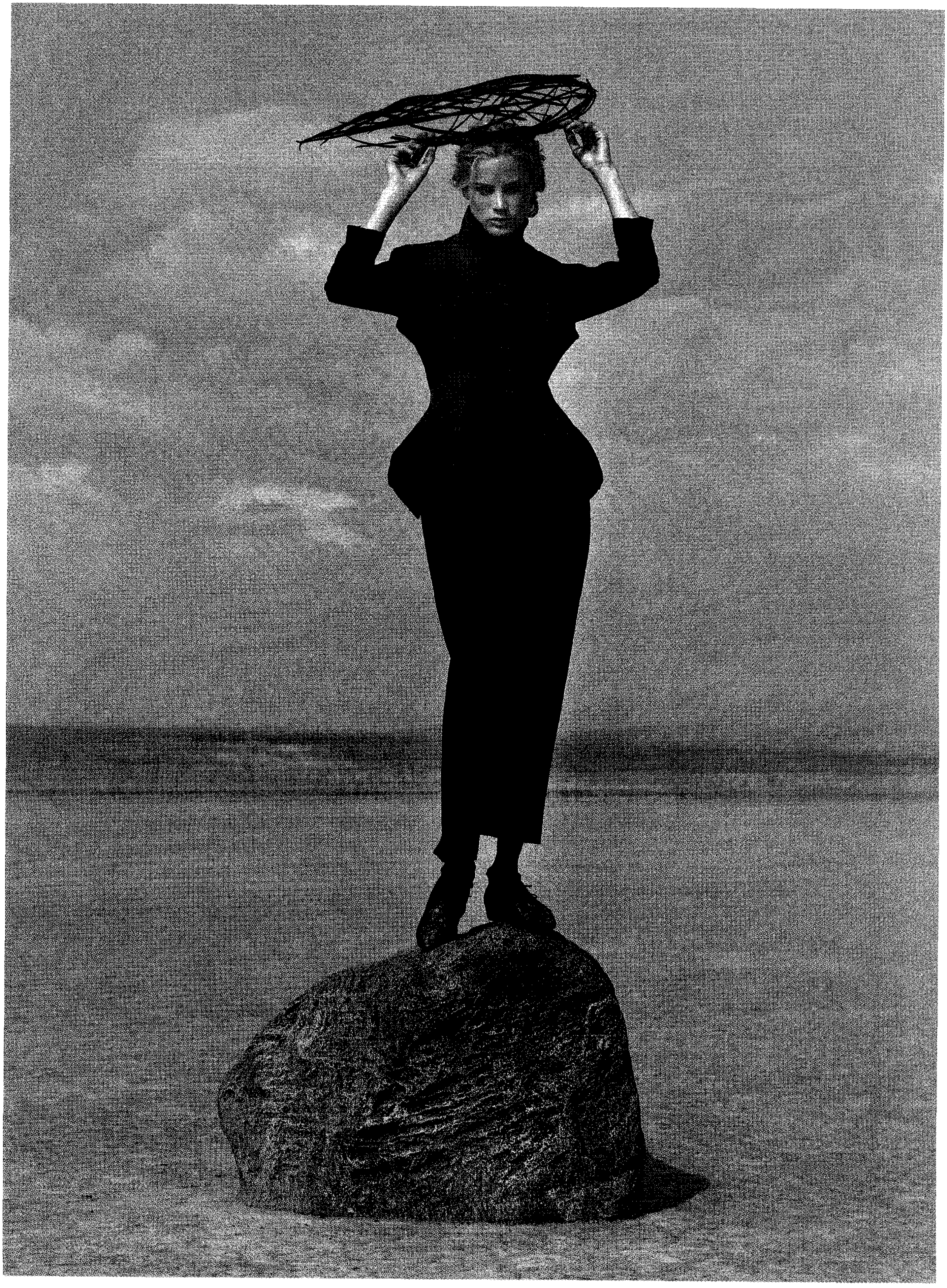


A headpiece of ostrich quills by the milliner Stephen Jones is worn with a wool-mix poncho by Donna Karan.

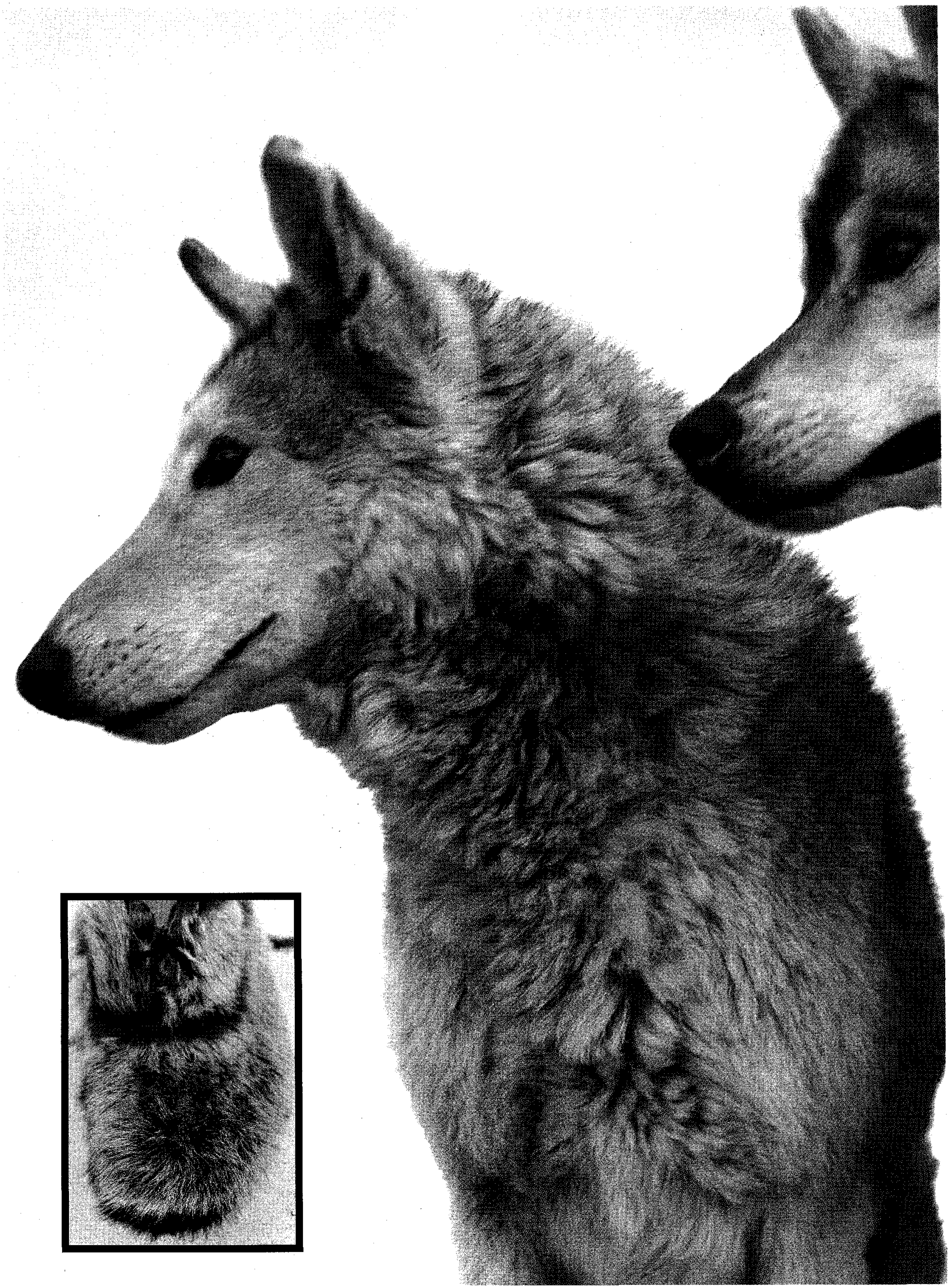


An Edwardian-style costume in black paper radzmir by Calvin Klein, with a Dai Rees "rock" hat.

Blankets were all over the runways. This one, by Michael Kors, is in sheared mink and costs around twenty thousand dollars.

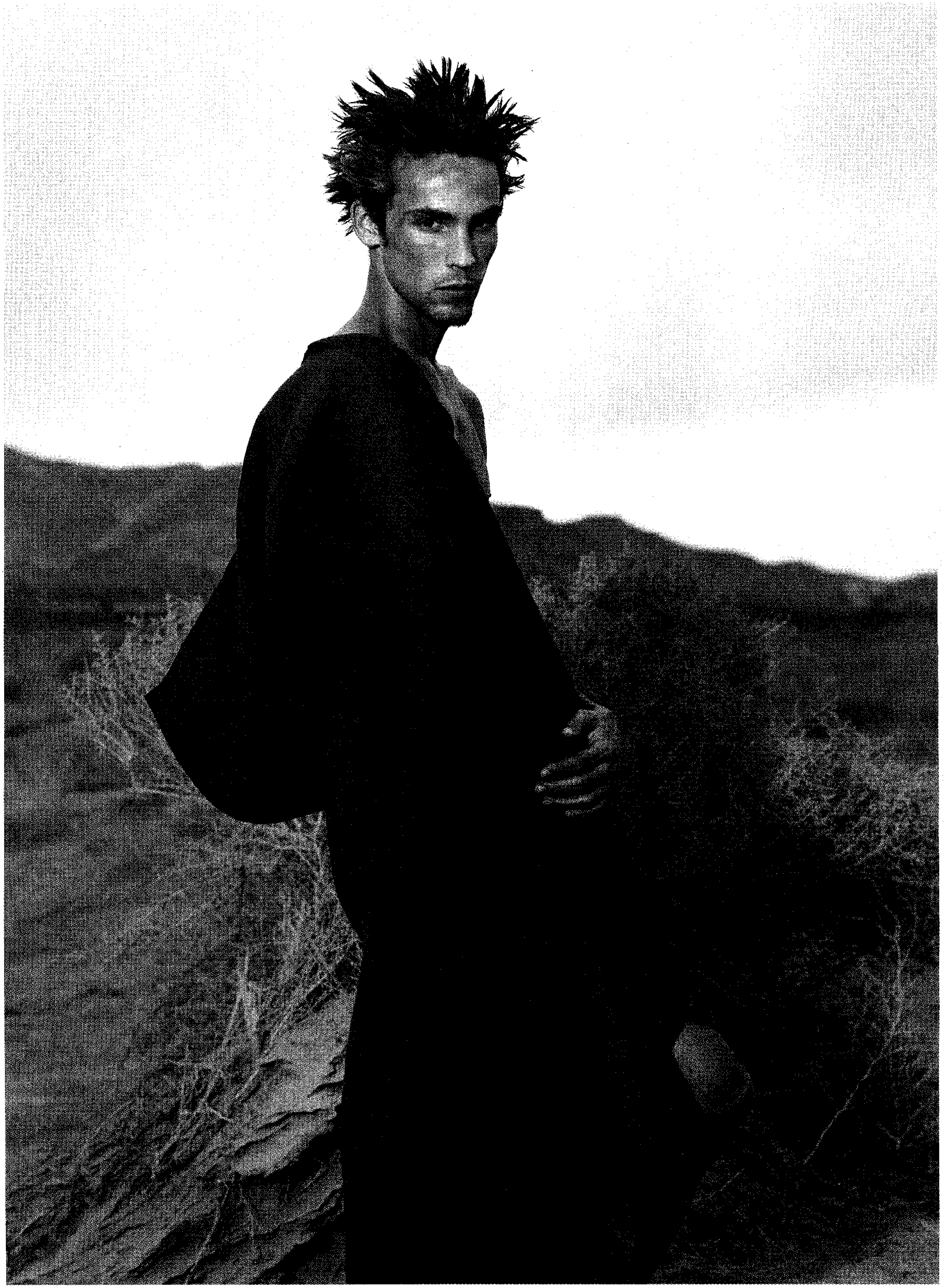


The serge jacket on this suit by the Japanese designer Junya Watanabe can be reconfigured as a muff. The "twig" hat is by Dai Rees.

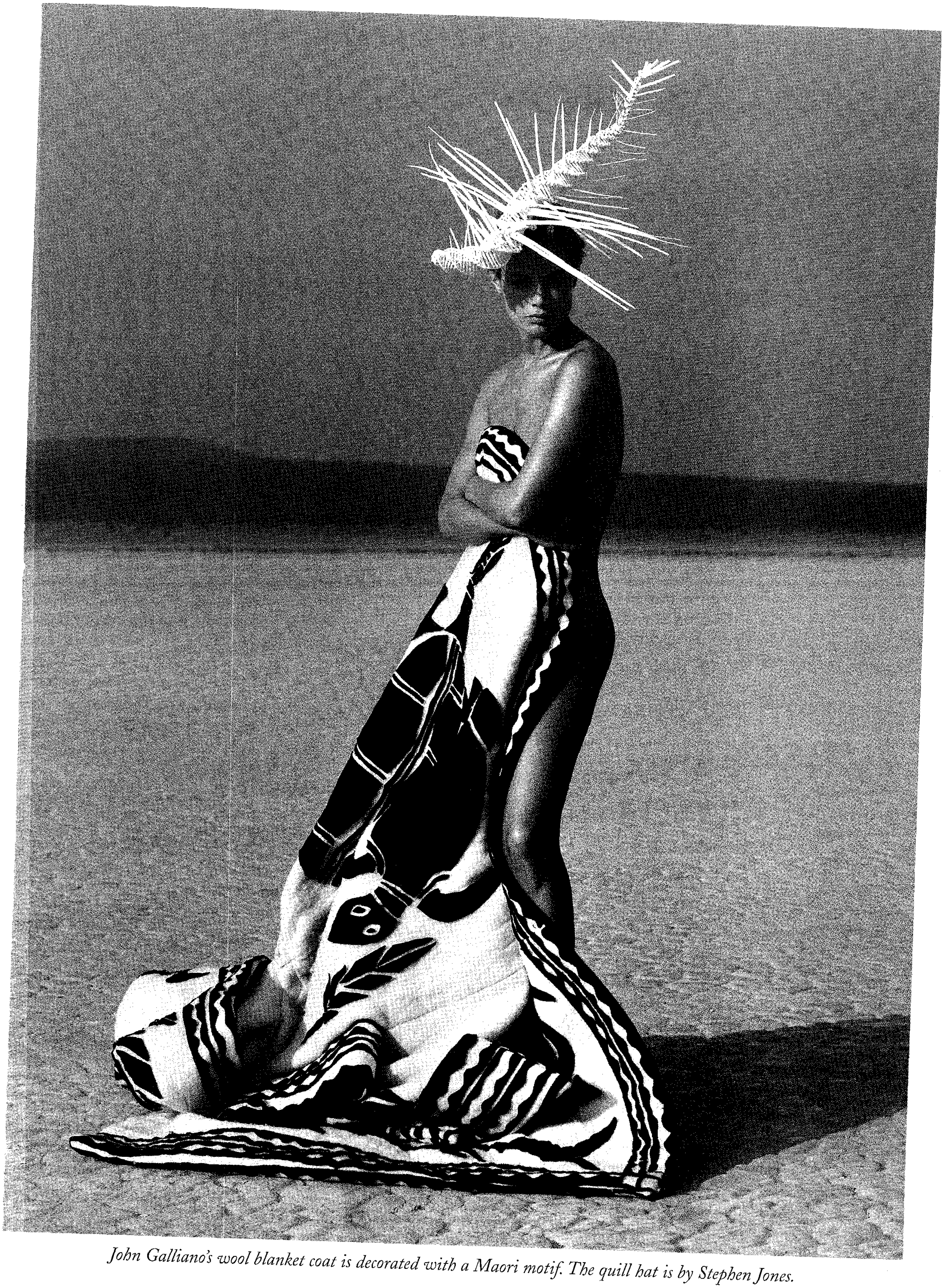


Are wolf packs the new “in” crowd? The London designer Owen Gaster included a couple of wolves in his fashion show, and Alexan

Queen's presentation had wolves howling on the soundtrack. The wolfish shoe by Manolo Blahnik is in reality goat fur.



Menswear designers have also proposed serapes and blankets this autumn. The example here, by John Bartlett, is in red bonded wool.



John Galliano's wool blanket coat is decorated with a Maori motif. The quill hat is by Stephen Jones.

OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

NOBROW CULTURE

Why it's become so hard to know what you like.

BY JOHN SEABROOK

BECAUSE I live in Tribeca, I end up walking around in SoHo two or three times a week. I usually have a destination in mind—to shop for food at the Gourmet Garage, or to look at the clothes at Helmut Lang or Agnes B., or to see a show at some gallery, though I don't do much of that anymore. I'm almost always looking to buy something. And there's a lot to buy in SoHo: it is a village of fancy sunglasses and "authentic" Indonesian furniture, edible flowers, high-design soap dishes and fifty-dollar Kliss Touch scissors, twenty-one-year-old Balsamic vinegar, plastics, fashion, and cell phones cell phones cell phones. One walks in and out of shoe shops, jewelry stores, and art galleries, and the shoes, the jewelry, and the art don't seem any different from one another as objects. This is Nobrow—the space between the familiar categories of high and low culture. In Nobrow, paintings by van Gogh and Monet are the headliners at the Bellagio Hotel while the Cirque du Soleil borrows freely from performance art in creating the Las Vegas spectacle inside. In Nobrow, artists show at K mart, museums are filled with TV screens, and the soundtrack of "Titanic" is not only a best-selling classical album but one that supports the dying classical enterprises of old-style highbrow musicians.

Today is Sunday, and the nominal purpose of my SoHo excursion is to get some good tomatoes at Dean & DeLuca, on Broadway at Prince Street. I walk across Franklin Street, which still has lots of old, ungentrified loft buildings that look as if they belonged to Original Tribecans: people who passed on SoHo in the seventies, when the commercialization started to get bad, and moved into lofts down here—cast-iron buildings with big, grimy windows.

At Broadway, I turn left and start heading uptown. Below Canal are the Chinese fabric places, where the cloth is one step up the production chain from textile factories—in bolt form, available only to the trade. Across Canal, the fabric emerges from the bolt state, rendered into T-shirts and jeans and shorts and khakis, hastily stitched together in a local sweatshop, and selling for tendollahtendollah and eightdollaheightdollah out on the street. Then, around Broome, you come to the hip-hop emporia that have sprung up around Canal Jeans. These stores, like Yellow Rat Bastard and Pulse and Active Warehouse, are also selling T-shirts and jeans and shorts and khakis, but something has been added to the clothes—the brand. In buying the shirt, you're buying the label, which will become part of your identity in the mosh pit of identities out on lower Broadway. The branding is done by combining a commercial trademark with one or another subcultural motif, a subculture the buyer belongs to or wants to join: surfing, skateboarding, and all-around hip-hop bro'dom are the main motifs in these stores. The brand is the price of your admission to the subculture. The brand is neither quite marketing nor culture; it's the catalyst, the filament of platinum that makes culture and marketing combine.

Young brands, like Porn Star, Exsto, and Triple Five Soul, jockey for attention within the thirteen-year-old demographic. Yellow Rat has created urban scenes for displaying different groupings of clothes—a fleabag hotel, a bodega—so that it feels as if you were slipping into something more than clothes, into a whole street identity. The Wu-Tang Clan's vaguely sinister appropriation of imagery from seventies kung fu movies has filtered into a lot of logo design. By the time I reach Active Warehouse, where some of the young salespeople wear futuristic headsets, it feels like I'm in a Puff Daddy video.

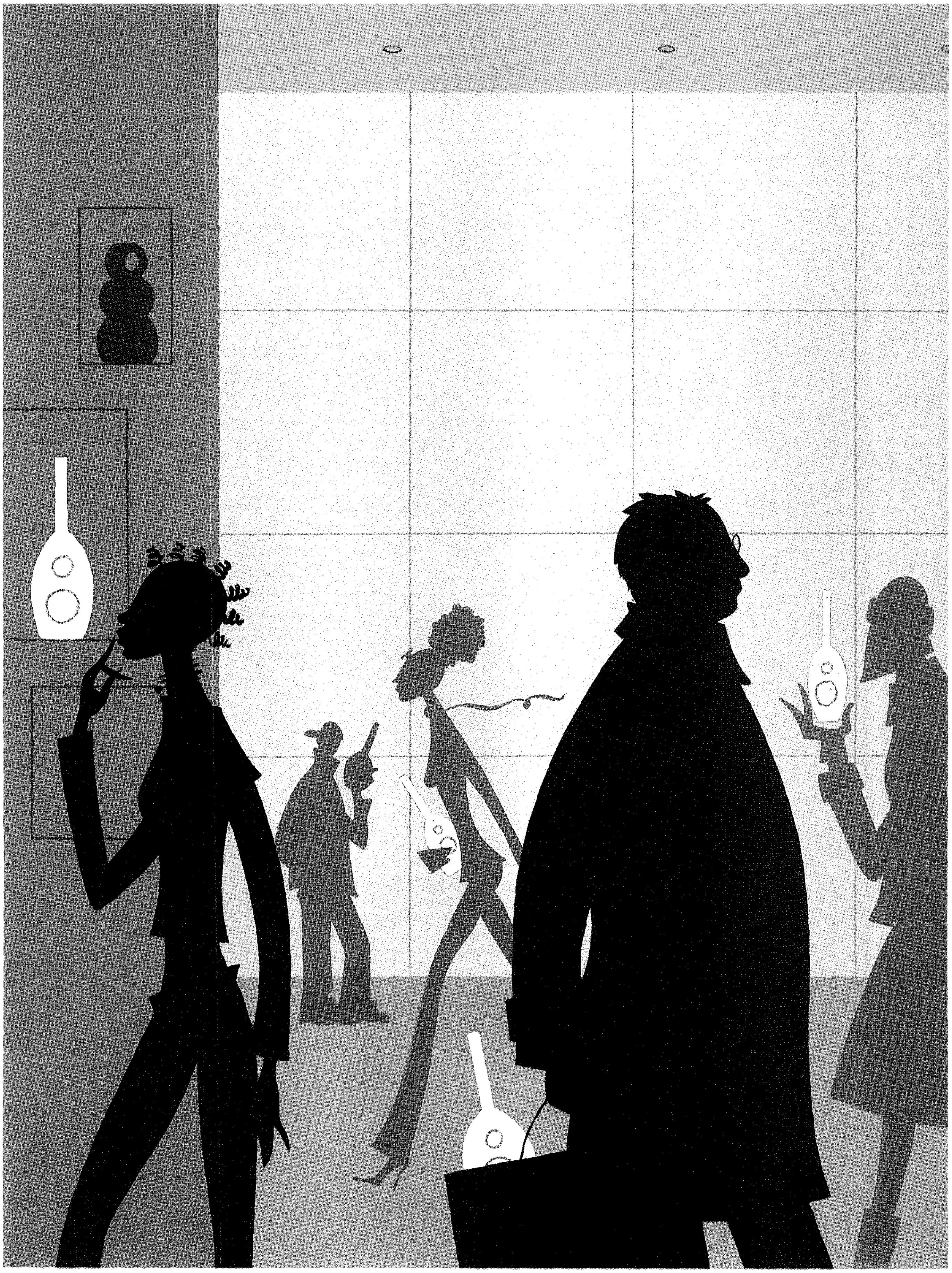
This lower third of the brand hierarchy ends just south of Spring Street, with Old Navy, which mainstreams the outthere subcultural styles in the hip-hop stores into a more universally accessible look. Around Spring, the welter of low brands resolves itself into the middle-brand stores: Guess, then Banana Republic, then Club Monaco; there's even a Victoria's Secret, up at Prince. These stores are selling pretty much the same stuff that they sell down below Spring—T-shirts, khakis, jeans—but the quality and the tailoring are better, and the price is steeper.

A cluster of high-fashion boutiques has recently taken up residence just west of here, on Greene and Wooster Streets: Louis Vuitton, Helmut Lang, Costume National, and Prada. The clothes here are more expensive still, and the fabrics and the tailoring are apparently even better. But what's noteworthy to the student of Nobrow is that the hierarchy of price is not a hierarchy of style. The styles at the lower end of Broadway have more influence on the styles up here than those of the élite have on the masses.

FOR more than a century, the élite in the United States distinguished themselves from consumers of commercial culture. Highbrow-lowbrow was the pivot on which distinctions of taste became distinctions of caste. The words "highbrow" and "lowbrow" are American inventions, devised for a specifically American purpose: to render culture into class. H. L. Mencken popularized the brow system in "The American Language," and the critic and scholar Van Wyck Brooks was among the first to apply the terms to cultural attitudes and practices. In "America's Coming-of-Age," he wrote, "Human nature itself in America exists on two irreconcilable planes, the plane of stark intellectuality and the plane of stark business." These are the planes that Brooks labelled highbrow and lowbrow.

There's more than a whiff in those words of their rank etymological origin

ANITA KROENKE



If quality is made into a commodity that almost anyone can purchase, where does that leave the élite culture of taste?

in the pseudoscience of phrenology. But the words' roots also underscore the earnestness with which Americans believed in these distinctions: they were not merely cultural; they were almost biological. In the United States, making hierarchical distinctions about culture was the only acceptable way for people to talk openly about class. In England, where a class-based social hierarchy existed before a cultural hierarchy evolved, people could afford to mix commercial and élite culture—think of Dickens and Thackeray, who were both artistic and commercial successes, or, more recently, Monty Python, Laurence Olivier, and Tom Stoppard. In the United States, though, people needed highbrow-lowbrow distinctions to do the work that social hierarchy did in less egalitarian countries. Any fat cat could buy a mansion, but not everyone could cultivate a passionate interest in Arnold Schoenberg or John Cage.

The difference between élite culture and commercial culture was supposed to be a quality distinction. One could confidently say that Mozart's Requiem was better than Nirvana's "Lithium," or that a handmade suit was better than an off-the-rack suit. But these aesthetic distinctions easily lent themselves to distinctions of social status, too. As long as commercial culture was assumed to be inferior to élite culture—TV was considered a dumbed-down form of theatre; Elvis-on-velvet paintings a bastardized form of art; mass-produced furniture inferior in quality to handmade furniture—the people who patronized commercial culture ("the masses," or, more recently, Joe Six-Pack, that reliable lower-middle-class redneck against whom all others, both the rich and the virtuous poor, can distinguish themselves) could be conveniently placed lower in the social hierarchy than the people who patronized élite culture. This system had the added benefit of giving rich people a practical reason to support the arts. The status advantages that accrued from one's patronage of high culture were like the tax benefits one got for giving money to charities: they might not be your reason for doing it, but they were a powerful incentive.

In Nobrow, however, commercial culture is a source of status and currency rather than the thing that the élite define themselves against. In Nobrow, the challenge that élite institutions such as the major museums face is how to bring commercial culture into the fold—how to keep their repertoire vibrant and solvent and relevant without undermining their moral authority, which used to be based, in part, on keeping the commercial culture out. Thus the must-see blockbusters have replaced the old, quieter exhibitions—a practice that was recently defended in the *Times* by Ben Hartley, the Guggenheim's director of corporate communications and sponsorships. "We are in the *entertainment* business," he said, "and competing against other forms of entertainment out there."

Élite designers find themselves in a similar position. There was a time when mass merchants like the Gap knocked off the styles of élite designers like Helmut Lang, selling inferior versions of designer clothes at much cheaper prices. But now in the Helmut Lang store you find knockoffs of the T-shirts and cargo pants and cords sold in the Gap, except that Lang's clothes are made with better fabrics and with tailoring expensive enough to warrant charging twenty times as much for T-shirts as the Gap charges. Still, Lang's styles are the same as the Gap's styles, and this is exactly what makes them distinctive.

MARISA ACOCELLA

"I had a lovely time checking out great-looking men checking out even better-looking men."

TAKING a detour from my destination, I stop in at the Helmut Lang store on Greene Street, where these Gap-style T-shirts and faded jeans hang next to seventeen-hundred-dollar suits. The only sure way to tell the women's clothes from the men's is by the color of the hanger. In some pieces Helmut seems to be out-lowbrowing the Gap—going for the thrift-store look. All the impulses toward casual dress that I struggled with so ungracefully in my boyhood closet have here been resolved into the ideal Anti-Closet.

As I walk in, they're playing that Olivia Newton-John song from the seventies "Have You Never Been Mellow?" It sounded bad to me when it was new, but now something about this song—

LIFE IS A DREAM

A talent for self-realization
will get you only as far as the vacant lot
next to the lumber yard, where they have roll call.
My name begins with an A,
so is one of the first to be read off.
I am wondering where to stand—could that group of three
or four other guys be the beginning of the line?

Before I have a chance to find out, a rodentlike
man pushes at my shoulders. "It's *that* way," he hisses.
"Didn't they teach you *anything* at school? That a photograph
Of *anything* can be real, or maybe not? The corner of the fridge,
A cloud of midges at dusk-time."

I know I'll have a chance to learn more
later on. Waiting is what's called for, meanwhile.
It's true that life can be anything, but certain things
definitely aren't it. This gloved hand,
for instance, that slides
so securely into mine, as though it intends to stay.

—John Ashbery

the negative nostalgia of it—is sweet. My eyes stop on a T-shirt. I look at the price: two hundred dollars. Jesus.

"Excuse me. What's the best way to wash this?" I ask the salesperson.

"Well, actually it's better if you don't wash it," she says. "I know that sounds terrible, but the color fades easily."

Hmm. No washing. What does that mean? I guess you dry-clean it.

In the changing rooms, which are tastefully designed, the fashion psychopath makes an appearance. Buy it, he whispers. Go ahead. Buy it. You know you want it. Then you can be part of that whole hip-hop thing happening down Broadway, while at the same time being secretly above it all. You'd spend two hundred dollars for a dress shirt, so why not a two-hundred-dollar T-shirt that you'll wear a lot more? It's anti-status as status, another important principle in Nobrow.

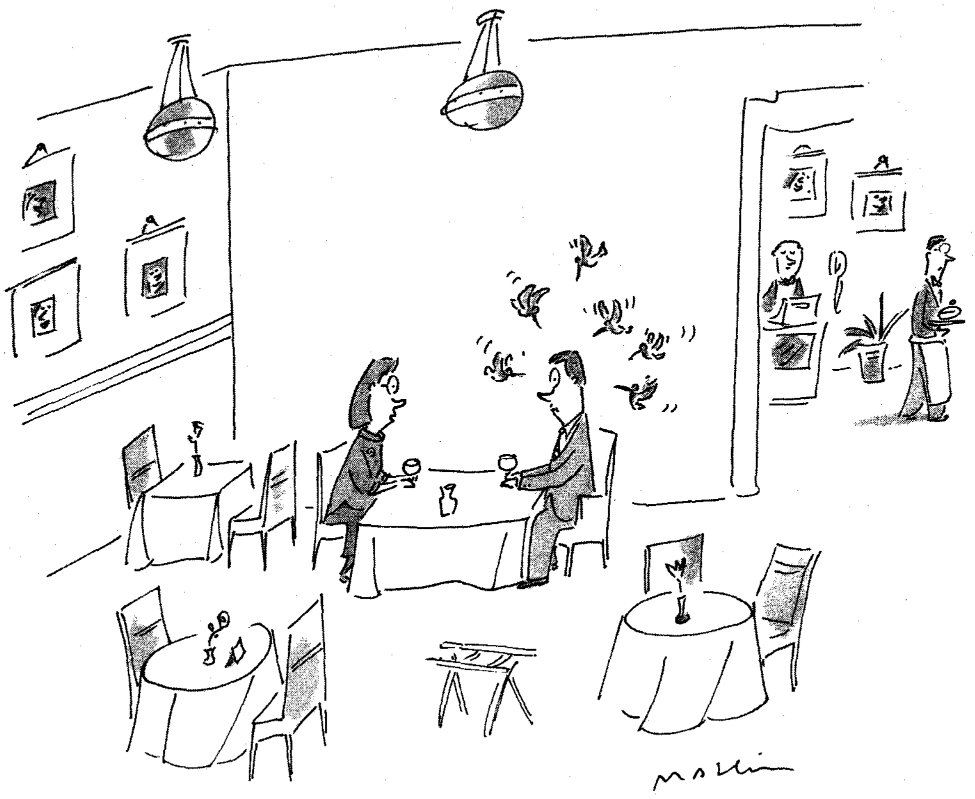
I try the T-shirt on. It feels great. And fits beautifully. A high-fashion T-shirt that looks utterly ordinary. I take it off and leave the dressing room. As I walk up to the beautiful, lanky English girl behind the counter, I don't know what I'm going to do. The fashion psycho likes to make a Zen thing out of it.

Then I hear myself saying, "Thanks, but I'm not ready to spend two hundred dollars on a T-shirt." I give her a smile, and I'm on my way, feeling victorious.

In 1980, in the *Times Magazine*, Barbara Tuchman published an essay entitled "The Decline of Quality," in which she explained in the gentlest and most disinterested way possible why it was necessary to be an élitist. "A question that puzzles me is why inexpensive things must be ugly; why walking through the aisles in a discount chain store causes acute discomfort in the aesthetic nerve cells," Tuchman wrote. The question, of course, wasn't puzzling at all: as the old standards of craftsmanship and quality were replaced by market-oriented standards of popular appeal, the inevitable result was poor workmanship, homogenization, and general ugliness. *Of course* handmade goods, made by a craftsman who cares about his work (whose impulse in making the thing is not merely utilitarian), will have a kind of quality that machine-made goods don't have. After pondering this question awhile, Tuchman concluded, "Quality is undeniably, though not necessarily, related to class, not in its nature but in its circumstances."

Nearly twenty years after this essay was published, there is reason to suspect that Tuchman's "circumstances" have changed significantly. What has happened in all the arts, broadly defined—in the decorative as well as the fine arts—is that quality, which was once the exclusive property of the few, has slowly and inexorably become available to the many. The old reasons for deploring the mass manufacturing of clothes and home furnishings—workmanship and design—have become the very reasons for applauding mass marketers like Patagonia, Banana Republic, Crate & Barrel, and Pottery Barn in the late nineties. Why buy furniture from Herman Miller or Knoll when you can get that clean modernist line and sturdy workmanship at IKEA and Hold Everything for a fraction of the price, *and* you can drive off with it in the trunk of your car? Quality is no longer very closely related to price, at least in fashion and furnishings. Manufacturing has improved; the principles of good design have spread. The craftsmanship and style of the goods sold at Nine West as well as in Banana Republic and Pottery Barn are so much better than the goods from a Korvettes or a K mart, or the other discount stores in which Tuchman might have experienced aesthetic discomfort in the late seventies, that comparison is hardly possible. While it is true that these chain stores cause standardization of style, it is also true that the good design of the products promotes an interest in good design generally, and this sends better-educated consumers off to the smaller, more independent stores.

But if the old totem of élite culture, quality, which at one time could be acquired only through that magic triumvirate of status indicators—knowledge, time, and money—is made into a commodity that can be purchased by almost anyone, then the élite can no longer rely on the old method of conspicuous consumption as a means of distinguishing themselves from the masses. If real quality is knocked off and made for a lot less, like the imitation Prada and Louis Vuitton bags you can buy on Canal Street, the owners of genuine Prada and Louis Vuitton goods are forced to become, in effect, inconspicuous consumers—to take inner pride in



"Had I known then what I know now—that you have the ability to attract ruby-throated hummingbirds—yes, I probably would've married you."

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in a goofy, slightly hysterical-sounding voice, while the camera catches glimpses of the artist's body underwater, in a tropical ocean, wiggling semi-erotically to the music. The video (actually two videos, joined at right angles on a large, L-shaped projection surface) is shot in the familiar MTV-surrealist style.

I ask myself the usual questions, strain to make the usual judgments. I slip out my once trusty slide rule of status and attempt to measure "Sip My Ocean." Is this avant-garde or kitsch? Art or advertising? Good or bad? The old categories and hierarchies aren't very useful here. This isn't quite art and it isn't quite advertising; it's art that has been made out of the discourse of advertising. A video, which is neither art nor advertising but a hybrid of both, is repurposed and used to market . . . the artist herself. And yet you couldn't really accuse Rist of "selling out." Her installation isn't really a commodity, though it's made out of a commodity. Rist probably couldn't sell this piece. (Why bother to buy it when you can watch it on TV?) Like many installation artists, Rist lives more on the patronage of museums and marketers like Hugo Boss than on the sale of her works.

The audience is at least as interesting to look at as the art is, and it seems to be aware of that. A few people carry into the Guggenheim an air of town-house seriousness—the earnestness with which one goes to "get" high culture at the Met or at the opera. But most people are here just to chill out and watch one another, secure in the knowledge that they *are* the culture.

As I sit here I see hip-hugging cargo pants, with both turned-up and straight cuffs, old brands (Polo, Tommy, Guess) and newer labels, like Muss and L.E.I. There are X-Large brand T-shirts, rave-style acid-house logos and cloche hats, gangsta-style high-slung drawers, Tims (Timberland boots), and Tommy Hill. Tommy Hilfiger, like Ralph Lauren before him, had tried at first to market to the upwardly striving white middle class by imbuing his advertising with images of Wasps at play. But it wasn't until the black hip-hop kids in the cities started wearing Tommy that the

the fact that *their* bag is the real thing, even if only a few cognoscenti know it.

Thorstein Veblen wittily skewered the rich for their obsession with handmade goods, arguing that such objects, being imperfect, were actually inferior to machine-made goods, yet the rich had managed to make those imperfections into virtues (such as uniqueness). By the late nineties, though, that trick was nearly up. As the middle class got better and better at appropriating the distinctive styles of the rich, imperfections and all, the rich were forced to go to ever greater extremes of imperfection to distinguish themselves, making high fashion out of clothes and furniture so imperfect and ugly, in such poor taste (in the old high-low sense)—like the thirty-eight-hundred-dollar ripped and beaded Gucci jeans that were all the rage last fall—that no self-respecting middle-class person would want to knock them off.

As usual, this part of SoHo is shoulder to shoulder with pedestrians in hot pursuit of status in Nobrow. When you do away with the old high-low hierarchy, people become more obsessed than ever with status. The action is happening out on the streets as much as in the galleries. At a group show in the Sonnabend Gallery, I turn and for a moment my eyes lock on an interesting rectangle of space. Then in the next moment I realize that it is a window and I am looking out onto West Broadway.

The downtown Guggenheim is displaying the works of the six finalists for the Hugo Boss Prize, a competition for groundbreaking artists, and I want to catch the show before it closes. I pay my eight dollars and go upstairs, where I discover that all six of the finalists are multimedia or installation artists. There isn't an old-fashioned painter or sculptor in the show.

After walking around the exhibit, I sit on the floor in front of a video installation by a thirty-seven-year-old Swiss artist named Pipilotti Rist. Entitled "Sip My Ocean," Rist's piece is a music video based on a Chris Isaak pop song called "Wicked Game." In the video, Rist, a former rock musician (which helps to distinguish her as a fine artist in Nobrow), sings Isaak's song white kids decided it was cool to wear him, too. Hilfiger has a $3.2 billion company, largely because he was the first white designer to realize, with the help of Russell Simmons, that white kids would buy what black kids bought, not the other way around.

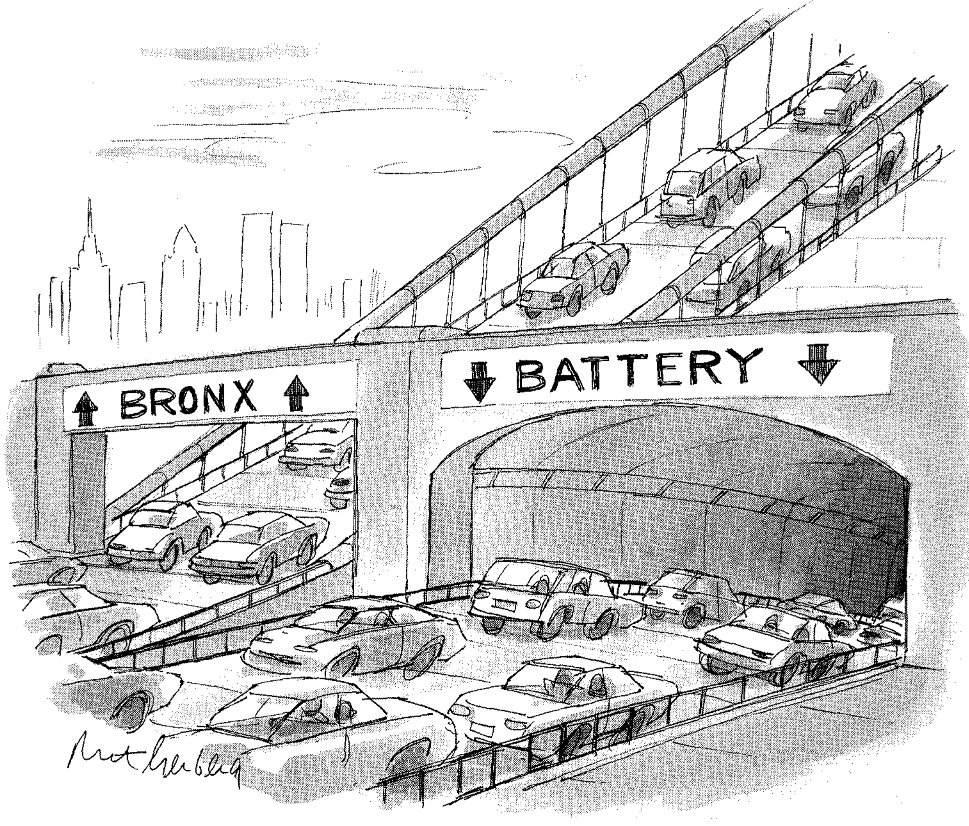
"Sip My Ocean" is like a paradigm of a transaction that is going on everywhere in the room—the art of representing identity through commercial culture. In using a music video and a well-known pop song to sell herself to this audience, Rist is doing in a more dramatic way exactly what people in the audience are doing when they choose their clothing or buy CDs. When someone says about a painting or a music video or a pair of jeans, "I like this," they make some sort of judgment, but it's not a judgment of quality. It's not as if you're saying I prefer this suit to these jeans, and the fact that I make this distinction (which in the old days was a distinction of quality) says something about my status. In Nobrow, judgments about which brand of jeans to wear are more like judgments of identity than of quality. Brands are how we figure out who we are: "We have a Lexus." "We have a Volvo." "What kind of skateboard do you have? A Shorty's? That's cool."

Fanship, brandship, and relationships are all a part of what the statement "I like this" really means. Your judgment joins a pool of other judgments, a small relationship economy, becoming one of millions that continually coalesce and dissolve and re-form around culture products—movies, sneakers, jeans, pop songs. Your identity is your investment in these relationship economies. Investments in certain tried-and-true properties are virtually risk-free but offer little return (saying you like the Rolling Stones resembles buying thirty-year Treasury bonds), whereas other investments are riskier but potentially more lucrative (such as saying you like Liz Phair: are you investing in her image as a strong rock chick, which is cool, or are you standing up for an indie sell-out and cK jeans model, which would be uncool?). The reward is attention and self-expression (your identity is in some way enhanced by the culture product you invest in); the risk is that your identity will be overmediated by your investment and you will become like everyone else.

These cultural equities rise and fall in the stock market of popular opinion, and therefore one has to manage one's portfolio with care. No value endures: the seeker of identity through culture has to take care to surf ahead to the next subculture before he is mediated out of existence. You want to be perceived as original but not so original that you are outside the marketplace of popular opinion. In the old high-low world, you got status points for consistency in your cultural preferences, but in Nobrow you get points for choices that cut across categories: you're a snowboarder who listens to classical music, drinks Coke, and loves Quentin Tarantino; you're a preppy who likes rap; you're a chop-socky B-movie fan who prefers Frusen Glädjè to Häagen-Dazs, or a World Cup soccer fan who wears FUBU and likes opera.

Chris Isaak, a slightly schmaltzy country crossover crooner, whose own video for "Wicked Game" features him in erotic clinches with a topless model, is, at first glance, a risky investment for Rist to make. But Isaak has a lot of his own identity as a pop singer invested in the blue-chip equity of one of the white fathers of wiggling—Elvis Presley—and Rist's underwater body wiggling seems to sample the image of Elvis's onstage wiggling, which is part of the common language that everyone in here shares. Yet, at the same time, the art is very much about Rist. Just as MTV videos are ads for the music, so Rist's video is an ad for the artist—and that's what makes it art.

BACK out on lower Broadway, I walk a block up the street and get pulled into Pottery Barn, at the corner of Houston. There's also an Eddie Bauer store across from the Guggenheim, next to an Armani Exchange, and up the street from that is a Sunglasses Hut. This block is beginning to feel like Fifty-seventh Street or the new Times Square: I could be in any upscale mall in America. (And soon there will be another Prada store, in what used to be the Guggenheim's lobby.) As I walk past these stores, I can feel this new, upscale mass culture pressing in on me, trying to make me and the rest of the people on the street exactly like each other—each of us a demographically desirable Banana Republican



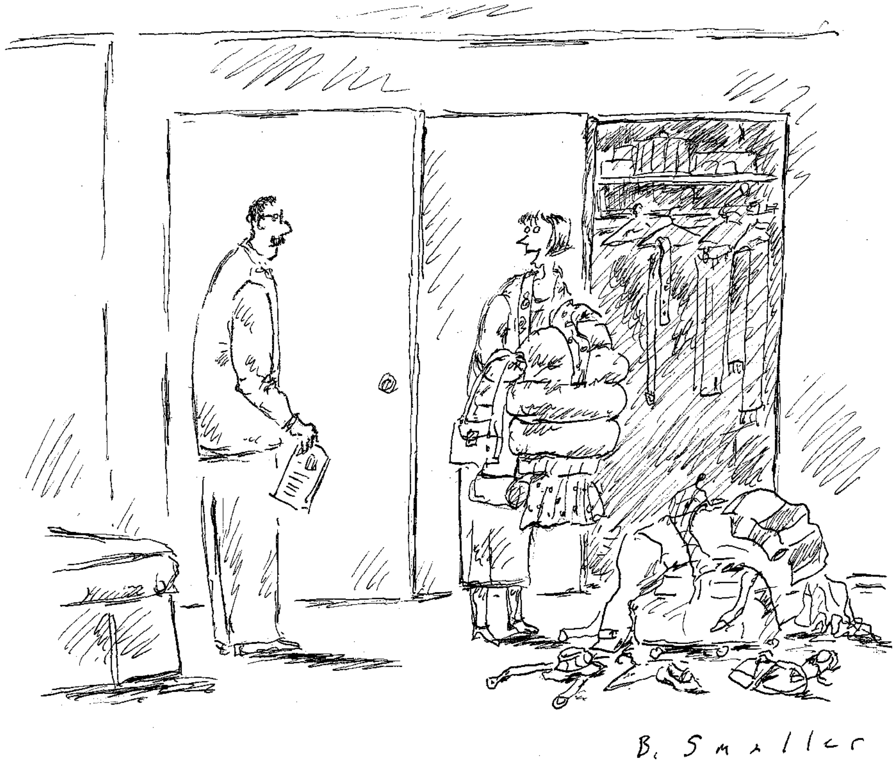
out for a little Sunday consumption.

The Pottery Barn feels like a museum, too. Seeing in the physical world furniture that you are already familiar with from its reproduced image in a catalogue gives it a kind of aura it wouldn't ordinarily have. There's even a sense of connoisseurship in this store. Some tastemaker has been at work in here, selecting traces of designs from different cultures (Southeast Asian colonial, French, Indian, and American, of different periods), lifting styles out of their cultural and historical contexts and recontextualizing them with other styles (a Montana cowboy goes on safari in the Raffles Hotel in Singapore) in such a way that no one style is obvious. It's similar to the sampling process going on in the Guggenheim—an identity is constructed out of the shards and scraps of any number of subcultural references—but here the purpose is to create a dominant, mainstream identity that's too bland to be really unique but is enough to make these mass-produced objects feel special.

Toward the back of the store I see a coffee table called the Cairo Chest. There's not much that's Egyptian about it, although it does make stylistic reference to a chest that a sea captain might have, and Cairo is on the Nile. The table is two hundred and ninety-nine dollars—cheap.

I have been looking for a coffee table on and off for the last twenty years. I realized not long ago that I would probably never find one I liked, because what I was really doing was trying to recover the simple cartography of status mapped out on my parents' coffee table, where cocktails and coffee were served, each at the appropriate hour, and where certain magazines (*Holiday*, *Town & Country*) made it clear exactly what place in the cultural hierarchy we belonged to. I lift a corner of the Cairo Chest: it has a pleasing heaviness. I have confidence in its workmanship, in contrast to that of a supposedly authentic Indonesian coffee table I saw recently in a store on Wooster Street, which cost five times as much. But do I really want to buy a table that eight million other people will have in their homes? Not according to my old high-low system of status, but maybe there is a Nobrow currency in owning the Cairo Chest which I don't understand.

Once again, I take out my slide rule, and apply it to the Cairo Chest. I make an earnest effort to find the table in poor taste, along strict high-low lines: mass-produced objects are low, and cheap mass-produced furniture is particularly tacky. And, once again, my sense of taste is oddly frustrated. The ingenious blend of approximate identities out of which the Cairo Chest is constructed has made it oddly impervious to any individual act of taste. It is as though taste, formerly in the eye of the beholder, had been built directly into the table itself.

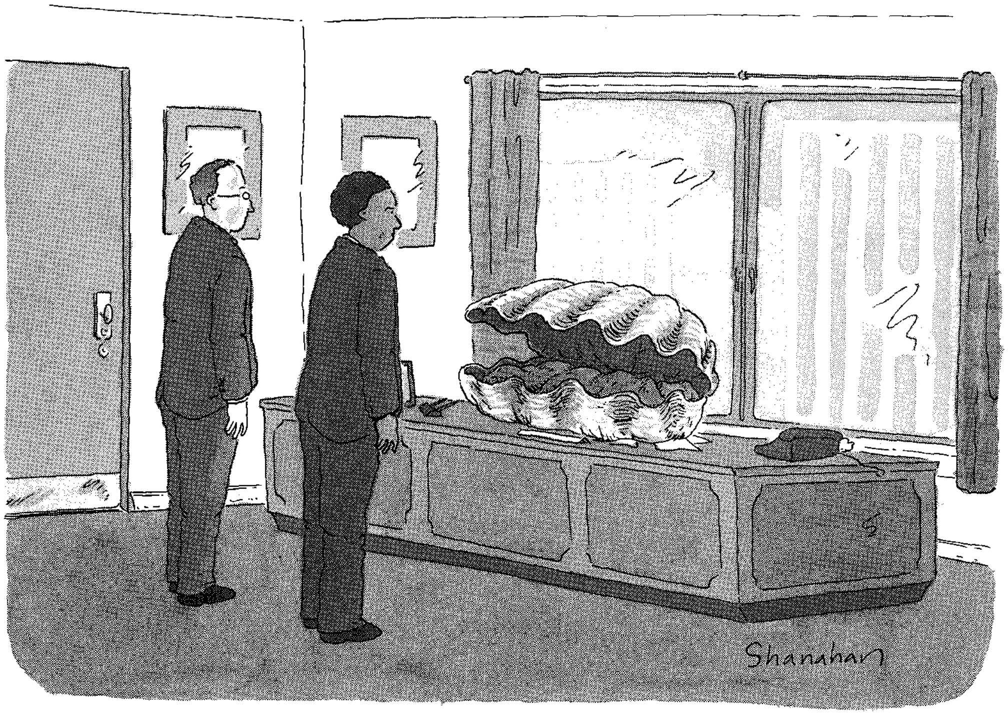


"I'm taking everything that looks twentieth-centuryish and tossing it."

Martha Stewart is an example of this kind of tastemaker. Stewart is saying, in effect, that if you follow these complicated and time-consuming instructions—if you put this parchment under your tablecloths, and put these rose petals in the napkins, and set out these different bits of colored glass in wooden bowls on the table—then you'll have good taste. Having access to Stewart's taste is like having insider information. It used to be that only the élite had access to insider information. Now, thanks to the Internet, everyone can have it. Even Stewart's personal taste is not particularly important to her authority as a tastemaker, which rests more on her celebrity and on her authenticity as a lower-middle-class Polish immigrants' granddaughter from Nutley, New Jersey. According to the logic of Nobrow, because Stewart's background suggests that she has no special attainments in the way of taste, her taste must be impeccable. Nor is it a blot on her authority that, according to the biography by Jerry Oppenheimer, "Just Desserts," she is foul-mouthed and dirty-minded. Just as people can deplore Clinton's morals and like him as a President, so people can deplore Martha's crassness and commercialism and like her as a tastemaker.

WITHOUT making a decision about the Cairo Chest, I walk back out onto the street and down Broadway to Dean & DeLuca, across Prince Street, to accomplish my errand: to get the tomatoes I need for tonight. Dean & DeLuca is my favorite downtown market. It looks like an atelier, with its high ceilings and big clean windows. The food is, in my judgment, inferior to the food in Balducci's, on Sixth Avenue, but the larger space at D. & D. inspires the mind to higher contemplation of artworks like the chanterelle mushrooms (twenty-three dollars a pound) than does the low and souklike Balducci's.

I become absorbed in testing the Belgian tomatoes against the late-season Jersey tomatoes, neither of which are cheap (three dollars a pound). I take refuge in this act: here, within this circumscribed space, my judgment can still operate. I cannot say whether "Sip My Ocean" is art, nor can I say whether the Cairo Chest is in good taste, but I can at least pick a good tomato. Tomatoes are my folk culture—a part of the cultural inheritance that has come to me unmediated from the place where I grew up. South Jersey doesn't have much going for it in the way of culture except for the tomato.



"Palmer, I want you to see to the legwork; Moscowitz, you'll be my eyes and ears."

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As I'm comparing the Belgians and the Jerseys, I remember an unpleasant experience I had in a cultural-studies class taught by Raymond Williams at Oxford, in 1983. This class, one of a series of lectures organized by a dissident, French-influenced, anti-F. R. Leavis band of English Lit students who called themselves the Oxford English Union, came at the end of my higher education in the values of Western civilization. Professor Williams had been talking about the problems of assigning value to nineteenth-century pulp romance novels, when I, without bracketing the word in ironic quotation marks, innocently suggested that one standard might be taste.

In the early eighties, it was still possible to have made it through six years of literary studies at two world-class universities without encountering any significant challenge to the notion that an individual's taste—the ability to tell a good book from a bad book, say, on the basis of certain accepted standards, which you could learn—was one of the most important qualities a civilized person could possess. Taste was the concentrated essence of one's cultural capital—the syrup made from all the great works of Western civilization you had imbibed, boiled down, and refined. Now that I had nearly finished accumulating cultural capital, I hoped soon to begin to earn income from it, by making judgments based on my taste, whether in academe or in publishing or in some other part of the cultural field.

"How dare you talk about taste when there are people in the world who don't have enough to eat!" someone shouted at me. He was a pale, intense-looking graduate student, and he was very angry. I was somewhat shocked at his response. Part of the appeal of taste was that it felt incontrovertible: it was like a fact, somehow beyond argument.

I said something about taste being a metaphor and about the importance of distinguishing, as Kant did, between taste as an act of judgment and taste as an act of sensing—the difference between that which pleases and that which gratifies. According to Kant, the man of taste can't judge adequately *unless* he has a full belly ("Only when men have got all they want can we tell who among the crowd has taste or not"). But this argument lacked the moral force of the graduate student's position, which was that no one has a right to judge as long as other people are hungry. For, after all, taste *was* based on privilege. That the cultural arbiters of old were privileged was not at all remarkable—it would have been remarkable if they hadn't been. But in today's multicultural world privilege is a reason to suspect the tastemaker.

Sixteen years after our disagreement, neither my élite notion of taste nor my fellow-student's socially responsible notion of taste holds sway. The concept of value, once defined in aesthetic terms (and, perhaps briefly, in some circles, in "politically correct" terms), has given way to a cheerfully unabashed "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" standard of value. In this new world, a Helmut Lang T-shirt, "Sip My Ocean," the Cairo Chest, and the Jersey tomatoes I select at Dean & DeLuca all share equal status as consumables, and as shares in the market of identity.

I carry my tomatoes and two beautiful lamb shanks, wrapped in thick wax paper, away from the Valley of the Shadow of Nobrow and get home in time for the six-thirty news. I take out the olive oil, pour it into the pan, and begin to chop celery. Then I cut into a Jersey tomato and discover I've been fooled. The tomato, which looked perfect on the outside, and which should be fresh, since it came from just fifty miles away, has the gluey, frosted-looking interior of a common, lowbrow supermarket tomato. I should have gone with the Belgians. ♦

FICTION

STITCHES

A secret between mother and daughter.

BY ANTONYA NELSON

"MAMA?" she said. The word cut through every layer. The dark house, the late hour, the deep sleep, the gin polluting her blood, the dream still spinning whimsically: all of it was sliced away by her daughter's voice on the telephone.

"Baby." Ellen emerged from the murk: naked, conscious, attuned. "Baby?"

"I'm O.K., Mama, but something happened, something happened here." "Here" was in Albuquerque, her college town, a hundred miles away from her parents' home, this her first semester. Ellen felt her heart beating.

"But you're O.K.?"

"I'm O.K."

"Not hurt?"

"I'm O.K. I'm scared."

"Skeered," the children used to say, Tracy and Lonnie, Ellen's girl and boy. "Scared of what?" It was three-thirty in the morning, and Ellen's house was lit only by the moon and a street lamp. Without thinking, she had brought the telephone from its cradle in the hall to her son's room, where he slept, safe. Ellen had been dreaming about her ex-lover, whom she had been missing now for longer than the relationship itself had endured. On the telephone, her daughter was crying, as if to punish Ellen for her unfaithful dream: look what can happen if you aren't paying attention, if your affections go wandering. "Scared of what?"

"What's she scared of?" asked Ellen's husband, his breath bitter with sleep and age, his presence here at her elbow similar to his presence beside her in bed: she wanted to push him away, she wanted to pull him close. Sometimes she sank her teeth into his shoulder and pretended that it was erotic. He loved his daughter without hesitation, the way he loved his wife, his son. It was cloying, reassuring, inescapable, horrifying. Secure: like a safety belt or a prison sentence.

"Mama, I was *raped.*" Now Tracy began to cry sincerely.

"What?" Ellen's husband shouted. They went back to their own bedroom, and he was dressing, muttering, lights were turned on, drawers were slammed, while Ellen clutched the phone with both hands, as though it might otherwise leap through the air.

"Where *are* you?" she asked. "Where are you, darling?"

"In my dorm," her daughter said, and that building erected itself, proud and institutional, enclosing the girl on its fourth floor, in her room full of posters, stuffed bears, and empty beer cans.

"Police?" her husband asked, as he tried to extricate the phone.

"Not the police!" came Tracy's voice over the line. "It was someone I *know.*" Now Ellen's husband was working pants over boxer shorts, the material bunching at his waist, storming from room to room in search of wallet and keys and eyeglasses and jacket, shirt flapping open like a flag.

"It was someone she knows," Ellen repeated for him.

"I heard," he said grimly. "I'm on my way," he added, tucking his shorts into his fly and zipping sharply. His decision had been made just as automatically as pulling a zipper; or, rather, his thinking had cleared a path through the fog of the night—blinding, exact, peremptory. Ahead of him he saw only his daughter. Ellen had to marvel. "You stay on the phone," he told her. His hair was wild, his shoelaces trailing him as he slammed the door.

"Don't let him come here," Tracy said. "*Please* don't let him come here." As if he could have been stopped.

"I'm going to talk to you, honey," Ellen said. Tracy was a young college student, only seventeen, a girl who had always been ahead of her years in some ways and behind them in others. Smart yet sentimental, maternal yet childlike. She was rounded and soft, dark, vaguely furred on her upper lip and forearms, the nape of her neck. She bore an uncanny resemblance to her maternal grandmother, had the same particular blend of bossiness and naïveté. They bookended Ellen, her mother and her daughter, exerting pressure from both sides.

"Oh, why does he have to come here?" Tracy wailed rhetorically. And, as Ellen wandered back into her son Lonnie's room, she could easily envision her daughter's olive skin, wet with tears. Lonnie's skin was exactly the opposite of his sister's—fair, nearly hairless—and it covered a very different, knobby body. In his face you could see both the child he had been and the man he would become, lean and frail, charming and awkward. "Of course your father's coming, and we'll just talk until he gets there." The hundred miles between them appeared in Ellen's mind—the desert, the bright moon, and the animals as they blindly scurried out of her husband's trajectory. He had raised the garage door with enough force to make the lights in the house flicker. But Lonnie hadn't woken up. Twelve years old, skinny-innocent, eyelids almost translucent, he was sleeping the passionate sleep of an early teen-ager.

"Is he mad?" Tracy asked.

"Frightened," Ellen said. "Men get angry when they're frightened. He's mad at whoever raped you."

"Mama?" she sucked wetly in. "It wasn't exactly rape?"

"Tracy." Ellen pulled her bathrobe closer around her; the heater came on, and the cat wandered to the floor vent beside Lonnie's guitar stand. When had she draped herself in her bathrobe? What had she been thinking, a few minutes ago, standing naked in her son's bedroom? She and her husband had had sex before going to sleep, she recalled now, which explained both her nudity and her dream of her lover. "Trace. What do you mean, it wasn't exactly rape?" She was used to her daughter's amendments: the extremity, and then the backpedalling.

"I mean, I knew him, I know him, and he invited me to his house, and I went there, and I thought we might have sex. Don't keep saying my name," she added, stepping out of her tragedy for a moment to be irritated.

"There can still be rape—"

"I don't think it was rape. I agreed, I wanted it. I mean, I wanted some of it. He's my professor."

Ellen's heart hammered in a new kind of anger, the anger that comes after the fear and begins to refine itself, to take shape in more intricate ways, like lace, like coral, around any extenuating circumstance. The worst thing—well, that wasn't what had happened to Tracy. It wasn't simple violence of the sort Ellen had envisioned. The man hadn't been a stranger in an alley or a burglar in the dorm. He hadn't been a frat boy at a party or one of a gang of drunks in a bar. Instead, he was a middle-aged man in a bed with a headboard, piles of books on the table beside it, floral sheets, prescription meds in the night-table drawer, a room not unlike the one that Ellen shared with her husband, filled with the familiar objects of comfort and respectable living, complication and texture. Instantly, that house formed in Ellen's mind, growing swiftly from one fruitful word, "professor," the divorced professor, the separated professor, the lecherous professor whose wife was out of town or teaching her own seminar, and Tracy there in that house, seduced by the older man's flattering attention. "Tell me," Ellen said to her daughter. "Tell me what happened."

"He's my voice-and-movement teacher," she began, and what followed was not surprising, not to Ellen, who had also been to college, who had also developed crushes on professors, who knew all about the liberal arts. What was surprising, what had always surprised Ellen about this daughter of hers, was how she never failed to bring her female business to her mother—breasts, boys, menstruation, makeup, catfights, betrayal. It was unnerving to be this girl's mother. She was so *forthcoming.* So frankly healthy and unfucked-up. How had she become this way? Ellen felt somehow excluded from the process; she wasn't so healthy herself, still vaguely anorexic, still drinking too much and smoking occasionally, lying to her husband about her affections.

"How old is this professor?" Ellen asked suddenly. Something Tracy had said had made the image of the man shift. The bed, it was a water bed.

"He's not actually a professor, per se," Tracy said. "He's more like a T.A."

"Per se."

"What?"

"How old is the T.A.?"

"I dunno. Twenty-five?"

Ellen sighed. Not so much younger than her ex-lover. Now the professor's stately bedroom was devolving into her

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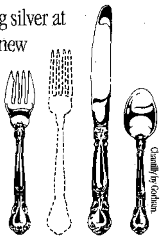

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lover's ratty apartment. Mattress on the floor, stolen silverware, chairs festooned with duct tape, disposable razors, wine in a box.

"He raped you? Or you had sex when you didn't want to? Or what?"

"Mama?"

"What, babe? What, Trace?"

"You know the most awful thing? The awfullest-seeming thing, the thing that's just really, *really* hard to handle?"

"What, doll?" Ellen played with the phone's telescoping antenna, up and then down, patience a tone of voice she put on like a hat.

"A man crying," Tracy said. "I don't know why, but I can't take it."

There was no good reaction to a man's crying, Ellen thought, not one that would work. Men didn't know how to do it, how to modulate, how to breathe or to minister to their own sudden emissions. She was reminded of her husband's crying. When he had believed that their life together was over, he had wept. Tracy was right. It *was* an awful thing; it left her full of awe. Ellen thought that men would be inept at childbirth as well; they were so ugly in pain, so bad at giving in to a force larger than themselves. "Baby," she said. "Why was he crying? Why?"

"Because he hurt me."

Once more, Ellen felt anger rise in her. Anger and empathy: these accompanied the guilt and love she felt for her daughter and always would. She paced the house's flowchart of a floor plan—hallway, kitchen, dining room, living room, hallway—a smooth oval that her children used to run around, as if they were at a racetrack. The cat, the same age as Tracy, watched her, blinking calmly. This man in distant Albuquerque kept shifting character in Ellen's mind, elastic as a superhero. She focussed instead on the image of her husband, driving steadfastly through the desert, the moon beaming uncomplicatedly down upon him, both of his hands on the wheel. *He* was not a shape-changer. "*How* did he hurt you? What did he do?"

"Oh, it's embarrassing."

Ellen heard a near-giggle in the girl's voice. Tracy always had frivolity just beneath the surface. She was a ticklish person, a jolly girl who liked to find things funny, who more than once had started laughing in the middle of a harsh scolding from her parents, so confident was she of their indulgence. Ellen could recall slapping her—how dare she mock her punishment?—and being glad to see that smirk disappear.

"Embarrassing how?" she asked, skeptical suddenly of the phone call, the tears. *Drama overdrive,* her son would have said. That was Tracy's M.O. She had a long history as a theatre major. Even before she was in college she'd been majoring in it, back when no one had majors, just tendencies. She wanted her family members to prove their love; she wanted to sound an alarm in the middle of the night and see them jump. She depended on their willingness to play along.

"Like sex," Tracy said. "You know."

"I *don't* know. Tell me." The cat rolled onto its back on the dining-room floor, splayed fat and relaxed, like a smiling drunk. Tracy was talking about her flirtation with her T.A. His name, she said, was Henry Fielding.

"It is not," Ellen declared.

"It is so."

"Henry *Fielding*?"

"You've heard of him?"

"Tracy," she began, then thought better of it. Had she herself heard of Henry Fielding when she was seventeen? What had she been doing at seventeen? Why was her daughter supposed to be doing something nobler?

"Everyone else calls him Hank, but I like Henry. Is Daddy really coming here?"

"Of course he is. You call, he comes."

Tracy laughed, and it turned into tears. Ellen left the cat and found a chair at the kitchen table, where the two halves of a squeezed lime lay in a puddle of melted ice. She leaned over the telephone, creating a pocket in which her ear and her daughter's mouth made contact. "Sweetie," she said, "what happened?"

"Sometimes it's called 'Deliveries in Rear.' 'Coming in the back door.' " She paused. "In my bottom?"

"Darling." Ellen shivered. She could not help imagining her daughter's naked body, there before her as if in time-lapse photography, the grinning chubby baby, the naked little girl splashing in the bathtub, the adolescent who ran on tiptoe from shower to bedroom with a towel clutched under her arms.

Tracy said, "So that wasn't actually rape, was it?"

"No?"

"No. It was more like . . ."

"Consensual?"

"Not exactly. More like a car wreck. Just. Out of control."

"O.K., honey. Out of control." Ellen fell into the echoing habit of a shrink. She could be grateful for that simple trick, if nothing else, after all her tedious expensive sessions in therapy, all her attempts to be cured of that lover of hers, that obsession like a virus, like a new life-form present in her body.

"He said his water bed might have had a leak."

"Water beds," Ellen recalled. "I thought those days were gone."

"It sloshed. Like being in a boat."

Ellen asked for the whole story. "I'll be the most angry if you lie." It had seemed obvious to Ellen—the truth. But many people, in fact, did not want to know it. Her husband didn't. He did not want to know that Ellen loved someone else. He put his money on the wedding ring, on the indisputable evidence that every night he climbed into bed with Ellen, and she with him.

Tracy heaved a monumental sigh, backing up to the beginning of her evening. "First I went to a bar with some friends. We had to cheer Tiffany up."

Ellen breathed evenly, trying to match her mood to the cat's. Beebee had survived, years and years, just by roaming calmly from room to room, meal to meal, allowing Tracy to come and go, love her and then forget her.

"So when I got to Hank's I was kinda drunk. I had some beer."

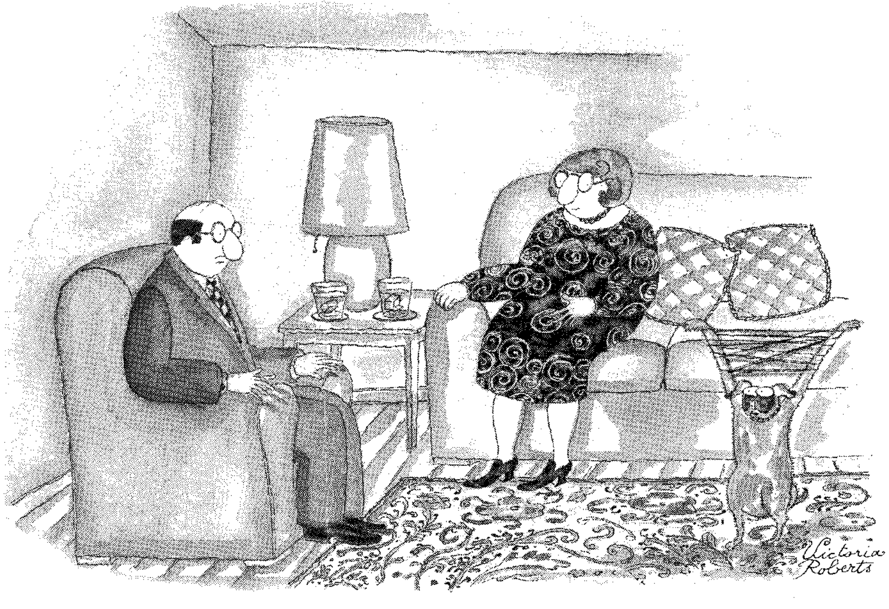
"How did you get to his house?"

"I didn't drive, Mama, I walked. I walked there. It's a guesthouse behind a real house." Ellen's lover's apartment now transformed into a tiny lighted cottage, and the revision was not unpleasant. What bothered her was her daughter drunk on Albuquerque's Central Avenue, wandering toward that cottage through the traffic and the whores and the roaming wolfish men.

When she got there, Tracy went on, Henry was listening to music.

"What kind?" her mother asked, thinking that this would define him, this movement-class T.A. But what kind of music would save him in her eyes? Classical? Jazz? Polka?

"I have no idea, some stuff, you know, like *guitars*. Henry's allergic to smoke, and I stank like the bar," Tracy went on. "You know how you stink after a bar?" As if she and her mother were now confidantes at the dorm, hanging their smelly clothing out the windows to air, hoping that their underpants wouldn't end up on the lawn below. Shouldn't a mother reprimand a girl who was four years too young to be at a bar? But where could she begin? She herself had been to bars underage, to the homes of professors and married men, to the apartment of her lover, and not so long ago. Ellen tossed the soggy limes into the sink and wiped her hand over the puddle, as if to erase her own evening of drink. "So I took off my clothes and showered." They'd been flirting with each other in class, she reported. He was shy, awkward, far from home, which was that famous daunting place, "back East," a recent



"Hey, that's a cat trick."

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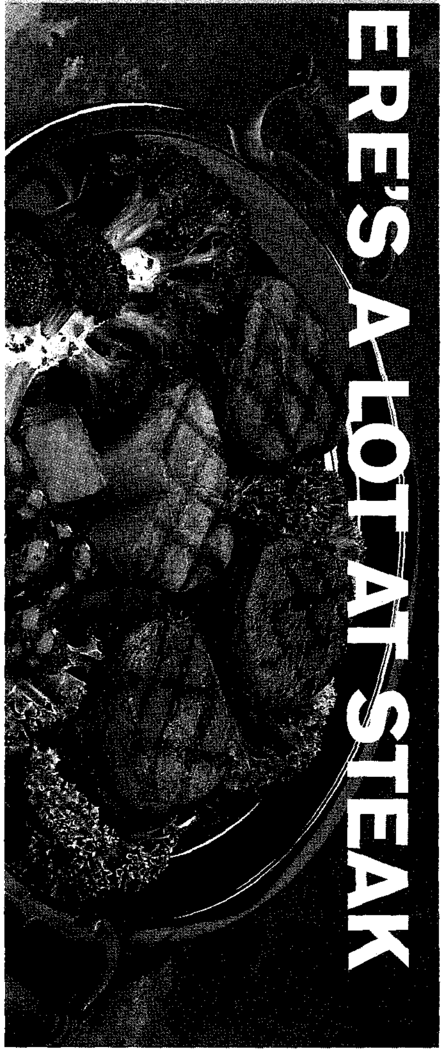


theatre major himself, and he wanted to be an actor. An actor! And Tracy wanted to sing. Like that maternal grandmother of hers, she had an astonishingly strong voice, rising from that ample chest that housed her extraordinary heart. How could Henry Fielding be worthy of that heart, Ellen wondered. Only her husband was worthy, only Tracy's father. Again she imagined him, behind the wheel, completely untutored in the complexity of this so-called rape, acquiring rage as he drove.

"Henry lended me one of his shirts. He wears these great old button shirts. . . ." *Lended*? What had happened to the S.A.T. champ they'd sent to college a semester early? "And then," Tracy continued, "then we started to kiss." She would have smelled like his Ivory soap, Ellen imagined. Boys often had Ivory soap, unperfumed, familiar. His shower would be so ill-equipped that Tracy would have had to use the bar of soap on her hair, that thick wavy Italian hair inherited from her grandmother. Ellen knew exactly how that hair looked damp. The tips of it saturated and dripping, like paint from a brush, steady trails of water sliding down her cheek. She had beautiful plump purple lips. She turned her eyes toward the people she loved, as guileless and faithful as a puppy. She was a solid, slow-moving girl, heavy and sexy, her body utterly different from her mother's, her nature sweeter, her keel more even, a sly funny girl. Yet innocent. Would Henry Fielding have recognized her innocence, despite her acting skill, her mature voice, her cleverness?

"He cooks," Tracy said, as if to keep the line from going silent for too long. "He likes to cook a lot, he says. Like Dad. Remember when Lonnie said that all Dad's cooking tasted like underarm sweat?"

"Yes," Ellen said. She swelled at the memory. She loved her son more purely than the others she loved. He'd told his father that the food tasted like sweat, it was true, but it hadn't been an insult, just an observation. That was only one of the million things that Ellen loved about Lonnie.

"I liked most of the sex," Tracy said, as if she were reviewing a meal or a movie. "It didn't hurt as much as I thought it would, the regular part."

"This was the first time?"

"Duh." Ellen, of course, would have been informed if it were otherwise.

"He *knew* it was the first time?"

"No. I lied." Now Tracy was crying again, the hiccupping variety of crying that would leave her eyes plumlike. Dark as she was, the undersides of Tracy's eyes were nearly black, like her grandmother's. These shadows made her look older, wiser than she was. She could fool bartenders and T.A.s with the bruisy rings beneath her eyes.

"I used to lie the other way," Ellen said speculatively.

"Really?" Tracy snuffled. "You were nineteen when you first had sex, right? And Daddy was fourteen his first time."

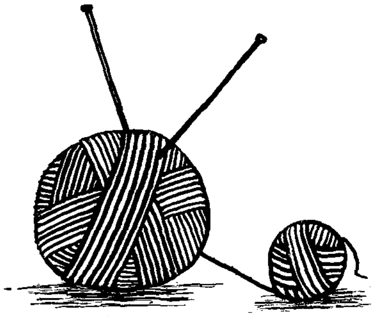
"I'd forgotten that." She wasn't sure she'd ever known it.

"But, I wonder, did anyone ever . . . Does everyone have to . . ."

"Anal sex?" Ellen stalled while waiting for an answer to occur to her. What was the answer? *All men want it?* "I don't know a single woman who enjoys it," she said.

"I can see why," Tracy said, and then burst out afresh. Ellen let her. All those years ago, when she herself had been in college, calling home, her mother would never have let the line go unoccupied in this way, silence and tears, dead air. In those days, with that generation, one was always aware of the ticking long-distance meter, the expense, the simple unease of intimate discussion over the phone—or even in person. Her own mother had absolutely refused to accept the human traits that weren't virtuous. She did not allow them in her loved ones. Ellen listened to her daughter cry with a kind of pride; she would let her cry for hours, if need be, hundreds of dollars' worth of tears.

"He didn't mean to put his penis there!" Tracy exclaimed. "It slipped, I think. He was confused," she sobbed. Oh, the confused penis, the slippage, the proximity of those two apertures, the slick bodies in the dark, the heated excitement of love, or its possible beginning. They were at sea in a leaky water bed, it was a storm, an emergency, he'd made a mistake. Or not. If not, he was rough, unkind, piratical, dangerous. If not, then he did not care for Tracy, neither her pain nor her pleasure. Ellen didn't want to think of her daughter having sex at all, let alone painful sex, am-



KATE'S DRESS

Last night, going to the metal closet
for foot lotion, I saw the red dress
she'd worn in here—just for tests—held
by its thin wire hanger, and below,
her straw bag and sandals, uneven wear
on the heels, insoles burnished by her feet.
It seemed one sleeve of the dress had just
dropped the straw bag and would soon
sweep it up again, because the light
was changing, because it was time,
and there were errands before the traffic,
or she'd just stopped in, because
we were always stopping in on the way
somewhere else, that breathless exchange
at departure—the feel of her narrow shoulders
through the red dress, before she let go,
and reached down for her purse.

—Julie Bruck

biguous sex. That body had been under Ellen's purview for a few years; she had been an exemplary steward. Who was this boy to use it so?

"It hurt, Mama, it hurt so bad."

Ellen involuntarily squeezed the muscles of her own buttocks. Sphincter, she thought. She had no idea what to advise for her daughter's pain; whatever the damage, something as straightforward as stitches was not the answer. Ellen could see the dorm room, its view of a nearby smokestack, wheat fields, the little city at night. Except that that was her own dorm room, more than twenty years ago, in winter, in Kansas. Freshman loneliness: it struck her with the force of a blow to the stomach. Loneliness never stopped stunning her; it was a lesson to learn again and again. "Baby, what can I do? I wish I could . . ." She wished she could take the pain, drain it from Tracy, and absorb it herself. That was how her children's suffering always wounded her—through her inability to suffer it for them.

"It's more psychological than . . . whatever," Tracy responded, "you know, else."

Ellen's head hurt. She had a hangover, she realized. Her daughter's phone call had distracted her from it, but now it claimed her suddenly, in a wash of dizzy nausea. Water, she thought, she needed water, and a white slice of soft bread and some ibuprofen and a hot wet washcloth on her forehead. "Baby, did you bleed?" she asked, as she went in search of the components of her cure.

"A little," Tracy said.

"And do you still hurt now?"

"Yeah. Two different kinds of hurt. I'm lying on my stomach, on my bed." She paused. "He used condoms," she added.

"Good," Ellen said, woozy at the use of the plural.

"Condoms *are* good," Tracy agreed. She was a girl who'd been educated early about their virtues, carrying one in her backpack since tenth grade, just in case.

Tipping the phone away from her mouth, swallowing water, Ellen thought, Hangover is crapulence. She thought of that word often on Sunday mornings, which this morning was. Sunday. Crapulence. It was the perfect word.

"I feel yucky," Tracy said. "I feel all wrong."

"Turn on the television," Ellen recommended. "TV is familiar." She headed now to the living room, to the enormous screen on which the family had watched movies the way their ancestors had sat in the glow of a hearth fire, communing. "Turn on Jack Hanna, honey." Wouldn't his golly-gee voice be a kind of comfort? Everything amazed and excited him: he was perpetually pleasantly surprised, like a kid. And *shouldn't* surprises be pleasant? Poor Tracy, with her bad date and awful surprise. *Liquor in the front, poker in the rear*, Ellen recalled, a once funny pun. "Jack Hanna's talking to elks," she said, watching the animals swing through the woods, knocking into trees with their heavy racks of antlers. A hangover felt like that, she thought, like a rack of antlers.

"I don't have cable," Tracy said flatly, "and Jack Hanna is dumb."

"Many men are dumb," her mother said. "But he's harmless, which a lot of men aren't."

"Henry Fielding didn't even know

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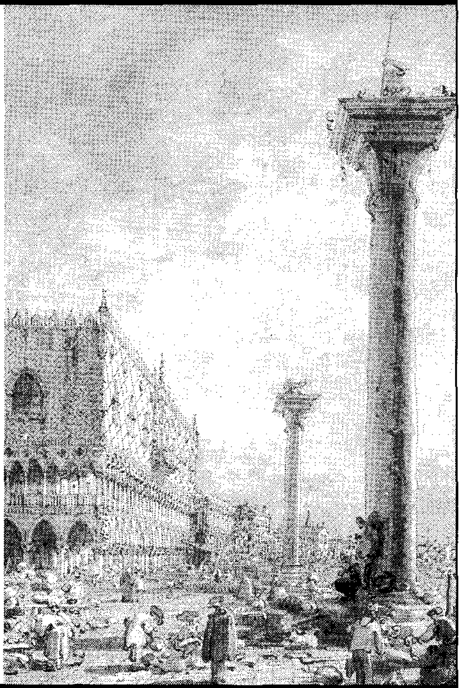

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how to get blood out of sheets," Tracy said. "That's how dumb he was. He was going to use hot water."

Ellen tried not to envision her daughter's blood on some boy's sheets. She had spent a summer changing sheets, cleaning hotel rooms, in high school. People abandoned everything in hotel rooms: Shame. Decency. Vomit. Pubic hairs. Leftover drugs, drink, food, clothing. She'd once pulled open a set of drapes to reveal a huge shattered plate-glass window. It was still in place, cracked and distorted, appalling in its shocking, violent intactness. But at that hotel it had been mostly the beds with bodily fluids on them: urine, semen, saliva, blood. There had never been enough blood to signal a murder. Just enough to suggest pain. A humiliation of some degree. The virginal. The menstrual. The reluctant anus. Ellen had wrapped them all into bundles, stuffed them deep into a trolley that she would deposit downstairs, where the Mexican illegals would apply bleach. Onto those beds Ellen spread clean sheets, crisp and creased, tucked at the corners the way her mother had taught her, a neat fold like a sealed white envelope waiting to be opened.

"What will I tell Daddy?" Tracy said. "I don't want to tell Daddy about all this."

"Your father loves you," Ellen said, which was supposed to mean that Tracy could tell him anything.

"He'll think I'm a slut," Tracy cried.

"No, honey. No." But Ellen knew, as Tracy did, that her father would not be able to bear the details. "Just tell him that it was the first time you had sex. He'll understand that. You don't have to lie about feeling upset. You are upset."

"I don't want to lie at all!"

"It's not lying to not tell him everything." That was Ellen's gift to her husband; she had saved him with it before. Listening to Tracy sniffle, Ellen was tempted to tell her daughter that her father loved her more than he loved anyone else. Was Tracy ready for that piece of parental honesty? To hear also that Ellen loved Lonnie that same way, *more*? Better? At what point was this blunt information fair game for her daughter? Her husband would never admit that he loved Tracy best. How could he admit something he didn't even know?

Ellen knew it for him.

"You and Daddy met in college," Tracy pleaded. "He was *your* T.A."

"That's true."

"I want to meet someone, I wanted to, I thought . . ."

"You will." Would she? Ellen wondered. "You probably will—someone like Daddy. Someone who loves you."

"I know he loves me," Tracy said, "but I don't want him to know what happened."

"I understand," Ellen said. She walked once more to her son's room. There he lay, sprawled, wearing boxer shorts and a T-shirt to bed, just the way his father did. In the fly lay his boy's penis. He had one, his father had one, Henry Fielding had one. They got hard and wanted to fit somewhere. They had the power to harm. They stood out like vulnerable targets. A woman had cut her husband's off, thrown it in the street. There it must have lain, as rootless and forsaken as a toadstool.

"Hear Lonnie snoring?" Ellen whispered.

"You know what, Mama?" Tracy whispered back. "Henry Fielding reminds me a little bit of Lonnie."

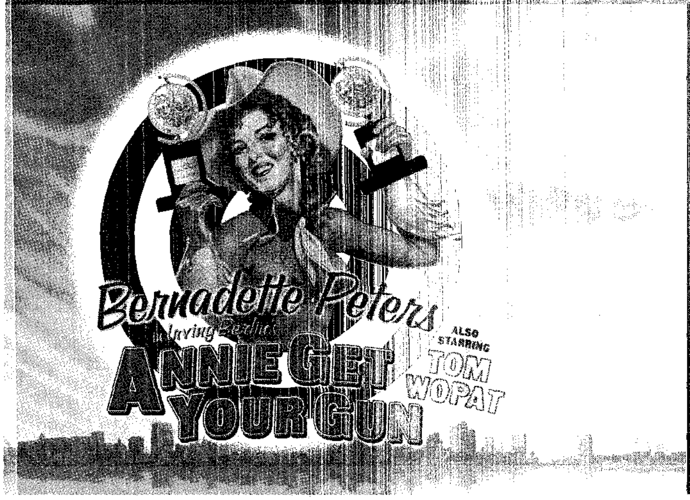
How could her heart not soften at that news?

"Yeah," Tracy went on dreamily. "You know, he has these clumsy big feet."

Ellen sighed. Her son was what had kept her from abandoning everything a few years earlier. He was a funny boy, prickly, eccentric, tearful one minute, punch-drunk the next. It didn't surprise Ellen to hear that Tracy had been attracted to a boy like her brother. Her son could one day make a mistake, put his penis someplace wrong, end up crying. Ellen's eyes filled. For Lonnie, for Tracy, for herself and her husband, for that lost lover, even for Henry Fielding, no doubt.

She considered fixing herself a drink. The clock read 5:03. Never had she had a drink at this hour of the day. She'd had one at 4 A.M. and she'd had one at 9 A.M., but never at five in the morning. It was both too late and too early. Why not? she thought. This was what her bartender, Paco, said instead of yes: "Why not?" in a bright exclamatory. Ellen adored her bartender. She visited him every evening, just the way her father had visited *his* bartender when she was young. She and her father needed an escape from the innocence that was their spouses—her mother, her husband, the placating good-hearted. Only a smoky bar would do, some days. If it

SPOTLIGHT ON fall culture



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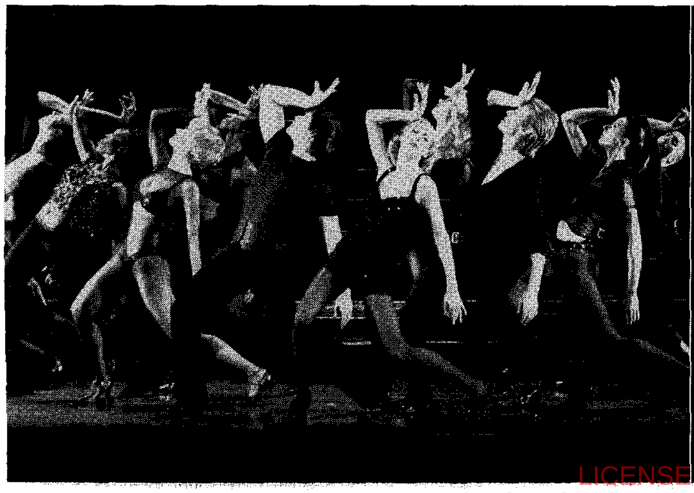

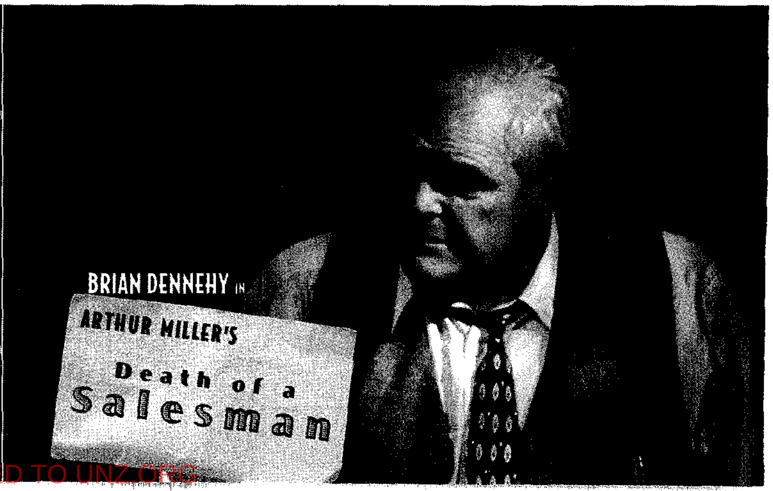

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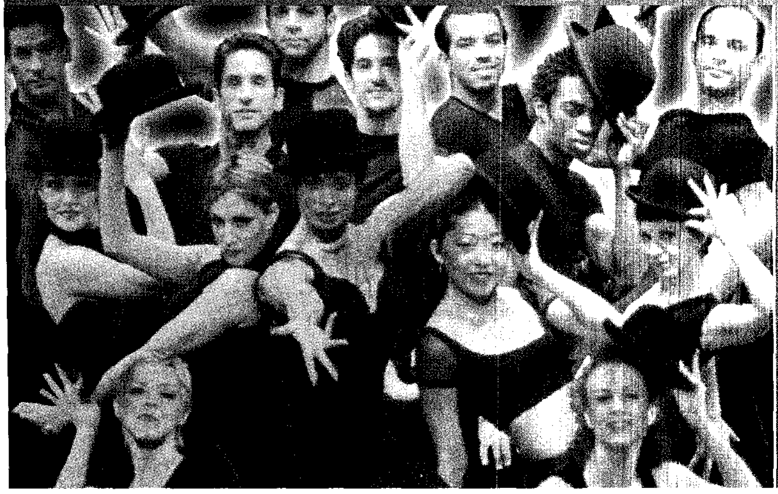

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Take a thrilling journey through the heart and soul of the blues, from its birth to the unforgettable music of John Lee Hooker, Patsy Cline, Billie Holiday, and more! One of the most exhilarating evenings of theatre you are ever likely to experience. The New York Times says, "It raises the roof! Latch onto a ticket!" **Ambassador Theatre, 215 West 49th Street, 212-239-6200 or 800-432-7250.**

THEATRE

KAT AND THE KINGS

Winner of London's 1999 Olivier Award for Best New Musical, this irresistible rock musical from Cape Town has audiences on their feet. Six magnificent performers portray a doo-wop singing group determined to succeed in the South Africa of the fifties. *The London Midweek* calls it "the wildest, coolest, most contagious show in town!" **Cort Theatre, 138 West 48th Street, 212-239-6200.**

KISS ME, KATE

Tony® Award-nominees Brian Stokes Mitchell and Marin Mazzie square off as battling Broadway stars in "Kiss Me, Kate," the knock-out musical comedy with Cole Porter's greatest score! No show has more backstage romance, off-stage insanity, or more unforgettable songs. Previews begin October 25th, so call today and make a date with "Kate." **Martin Beck Theatre, 302 West 45th Street, 212-239-6200.**

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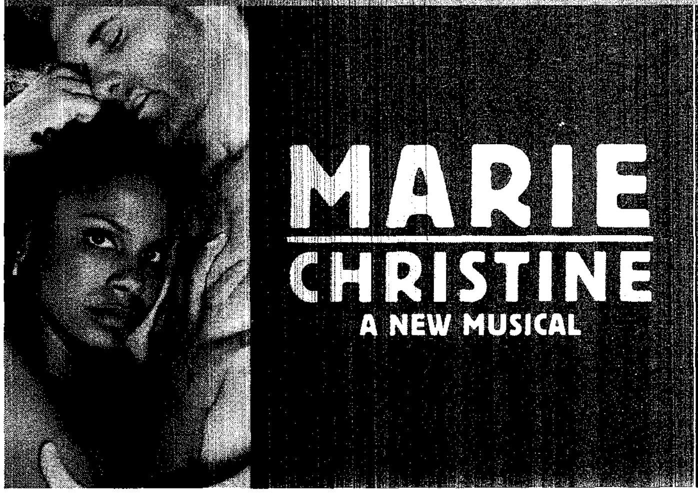

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RENT

Winner of the 1996 Tony® Award for Best Musical, the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and the show that brought a new audience to Broadway, "Rent" is "the breakthrough musical of the nineties." The music is soaring, the performers are electric, and the message is universal: No day but today. **Nederlander Theatre, 208 West 41st Street, 212-307-4100.**

THEATRE

SIDE MAN

The 1999 Tony® Award-winner for Best Play, "Side Man" enters its second smash-hit year on Broadway. Film star Andrew McCarthy now leads the extraordinary cast in this moving and funny play about the pressures of family and the power of music. Rex Reed calls it "the best play in town." **John Golden Theatre, 252 West 45th Street, 212-239-6200**.

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Broadway is jumping right into the swing of music's hottest phenomenon, as a company of dancers, a wailin' band, cabaret star Ann Hampton Callaway, and director/choreographer Lynne Taylor-Corbett (the movie "Footloose")—all under the supervision of four-time Tony® Award-winner Jerry Zaks—turn the St. James Theatre into a zoot-suit riot of music and dance. **St. James Theatre, 246 West 44th Street, 212-239-6200.**

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Swing!

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THE RAINMAKER

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Newsweek's Jack Kroll says, "It won Britain's Olivier Award for Best New Play, and now Broadway can see why." In a remote Irish pub, an evening of Guinness and ghost stories add up to what Ben Brantley in *The New York Times* calls "a beautiful and devious new play." **Walter Kerr Theatre, 219 West 48th Street, 212-239-6200** or visit www.theweir.com.

THEATRE

WIT

Judith Light leads the splendid cast as Dr. Vivian Bearing, an uncompromising and brilliant professor of literature, who must suddenly confront her own mortality. Winner of the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, "Wit" is "fiercely funny, wildly uplifting—among the finest plays of the decade," according to *The Wall Street Journal*. **Union Square Theatre, 100 East 17th Street, 212-307-4100.**

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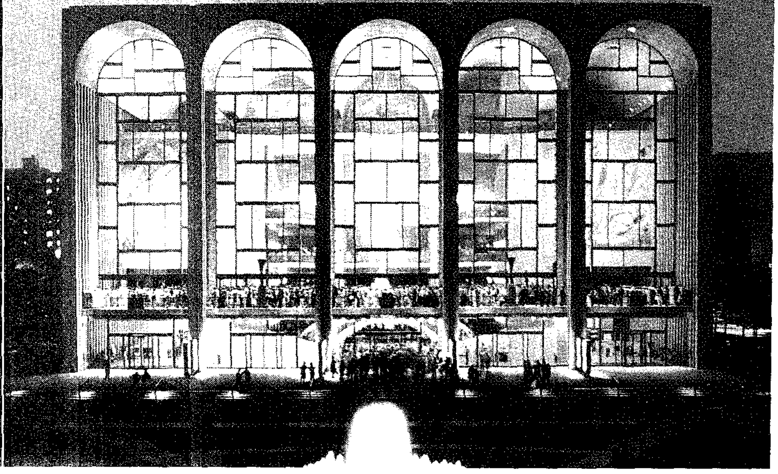

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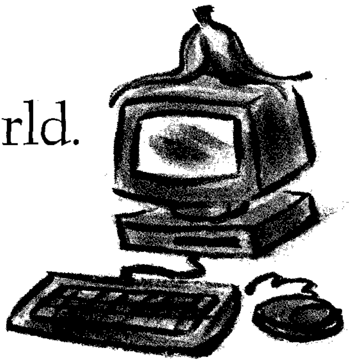

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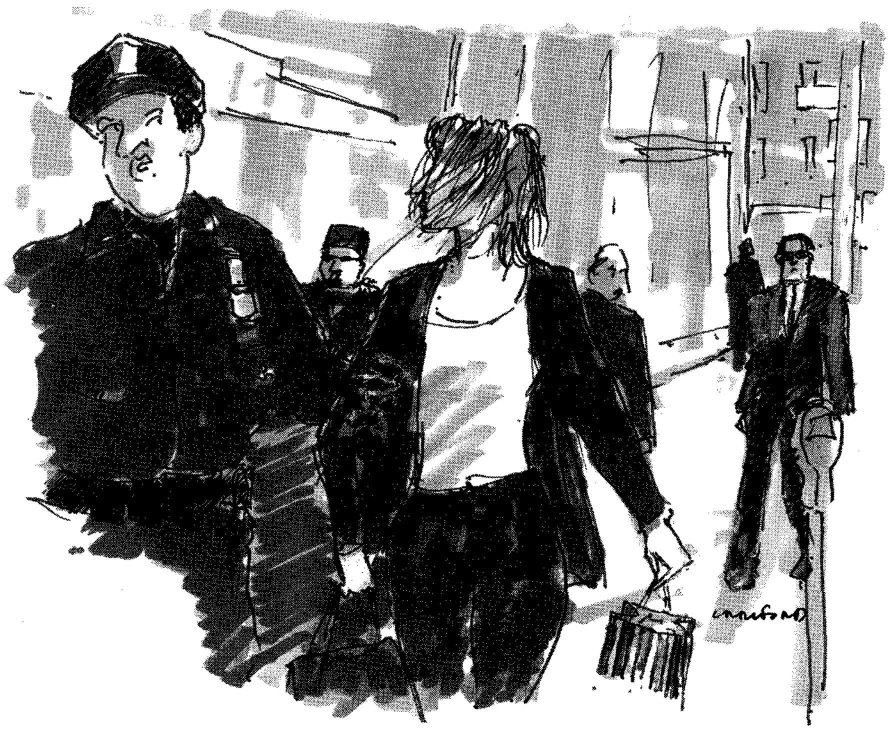


"Yeah, yeah, yeah. Save it for the hair judge."

• •

were 5 P.M., that's where she'd be headed.

"Mama," Tracy said. It had been her first word, way back when. "Daddy" had been next.

"Baby."

Ellen returned to her bedroom. She had switched off the lights and muted Jack Hanna, and now settled her sore head on her pillow, daughter beside her. The cat jumped onto her feet and walked up her blanketed thighs.

"Now it'll be all weird in class," Tracy said forlornly. "It's not fair." She sounded weary, depleted, capable of falling into an exhausted sleep.

"No, it's not fair." This was what college would teach Tracy. It was, after all, the only lesson, and some people never learned it.

"I'm sorry, Mama."

"You don't have to be sorry, darling. You just have to convince your father that you're O.K."

"I know. I figured that out. You think I'm O.K.?"

"I think you are." She did, actually. Ellen listened sleepily to the lack of static. Did she need to say that this was only the beginning of Tracy's difficult education? That no love would be pure, no gesture uncomplicated, for a long, long time? Over the phone line there was silence, as if they would now slip into sleep, into the same dream.

"I'm a good actor," Tracy said faintly, as if trying to rally. "I can make my eyes water in a New York minute."

"Useful," Ellen said. Then she heard her husband's knock on Tracy's dorm door and was startled lucid once more. From a hundred miles, she recognized the confident force of his fist.

"Sh-h-h! There's someone at the door," Tracy said, fear in her voice.

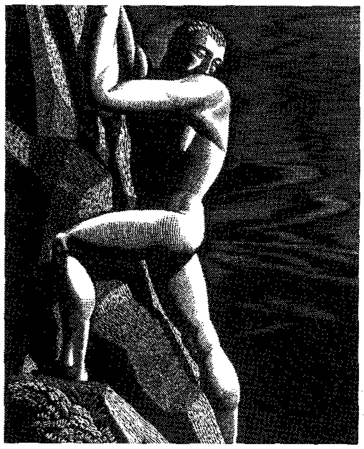
"It's your father. He made record time." Ellen sat up and checked her bedside clock: an hour and a half. The cat had stopped purring, ears perked, eye whiskers lifted.

"Let him in," she told Tracy as the cat jumped briskly to the floor.

"He'll know!" Tracy wailed. "I've *never* been able to fool him!"

"He won't," her mother assured her. "You have." When Tracy dropped the receiver, Ellen had the sensation of being let go, left behind. Now she was just a plastic instrument lying on the dormroom table while a lock was turned and a door was opened. *He won't*, Ellen heard, and would hear for a long time, reverberating, *You have.*

Far away, her daughter said her next word: "Daddy." And Ellen hung up. ♦



Rockwell Kent. "Mountain Climber." 1933.

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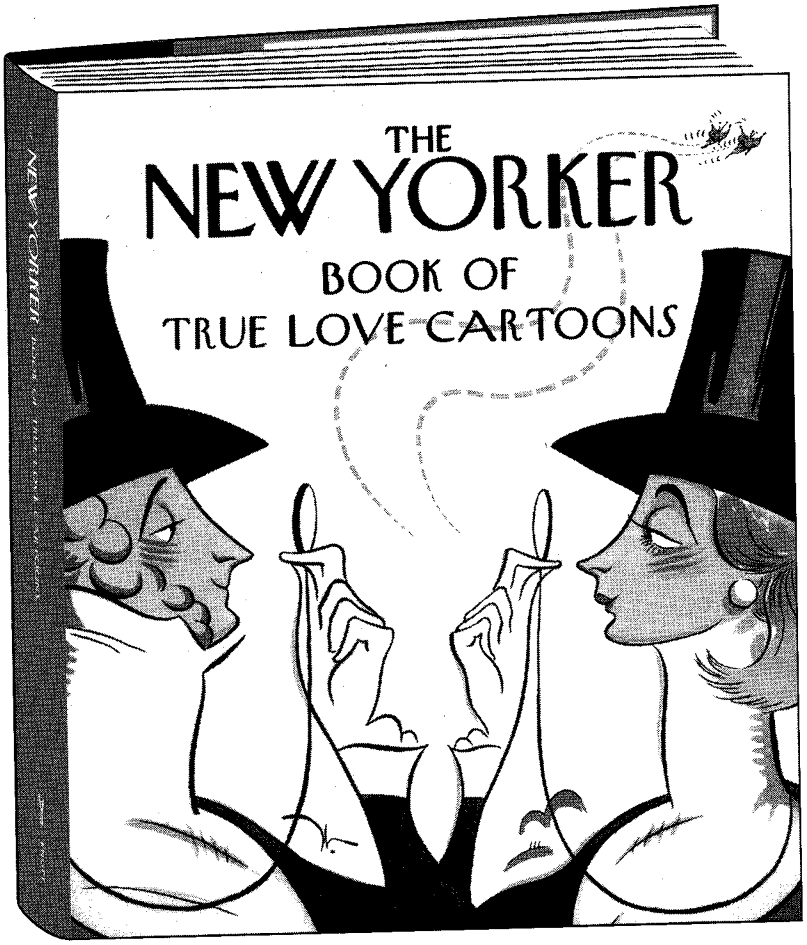
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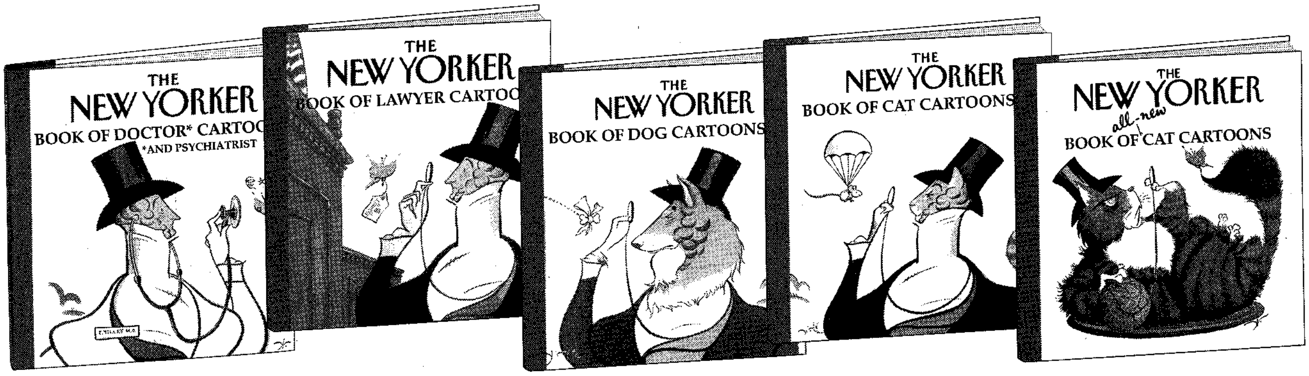
What else is funny?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THE CRITICS

SKETCHBOOK

THE FUTURE ALL OVER AGAIN

BY KURT ANDERSEN

THE impulse behind modernism was to embody the sensibility of the present moment, not some woozy recapitulation of the past. One of modernism's offshoots, however, was a kind of set decorator's futurism, a picturesque sci-fi aesthetic driven by the assumption that if today looks spiffier than yesterday, then tomorrow is sure to look even spiffier. The future was thus designed in detail during the middle third of the century, particularly in the sixties, with NASA space capsules and astronaut suits, the New York World's Fair, mod Courrèges shifts, "Star Trek," and—finally, definitively, in 1968—Stanley Kubrick's "2001."

Immediately thereafter, with the rise of be-here-now Luddism (health food, macramé, Earth shoes), followed by disillusioned post-hippie dystopianism (the movies "Blade Runner," "Brazil," "Mad Max"), any kind of hopeful speculation about the shape of things to come seemed corny and uncool. Instead, fashion designers (and artists and architects) in the nineteen-seventies and eighties were virtually obliged to rediscover and rehabilitate historical styles: long slim skirts and jackets with big, Joan Crawfordish shoulder pads; expressionist and figurative painting; pediments sitting on Corinthian columns and loggias made of stone.

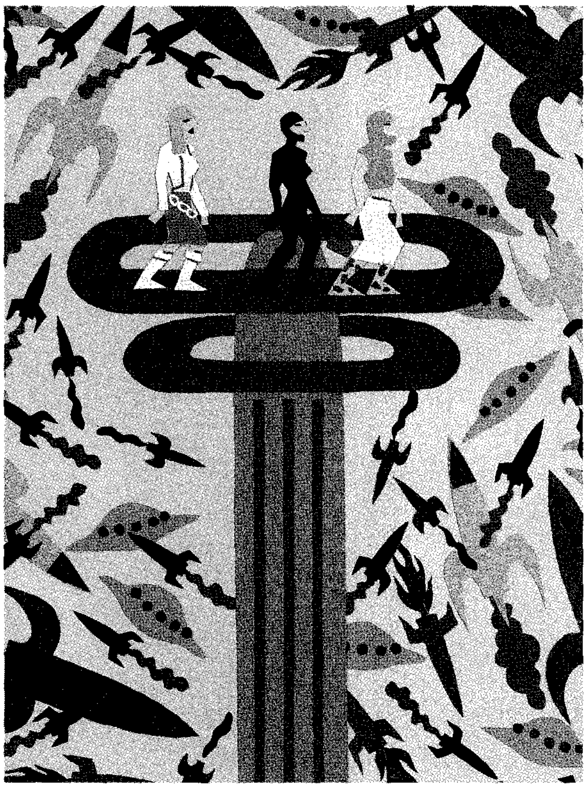
But the pendulum swings. The computer revolution and the endless bull market on Wall Street have made technological optimism respectable and even chic again. As if on schedule, here in the anteroom of the new century we find that we've been equipped with the pocket communicators and tiny lasers and big-screen videophones of Tom Swift and Captain Kirk; as far as accessories go, the future is turning out more or less as promised.

Fashion designers, however, don't seem to be up to the task of reinventing fashion for the new millennium. On the eve of the year 2000, they are returning to nineteen-sixties conceptions of the future: this season, we are being pitched "futuristic" fashion that looks vaguely 1966 because the mid-sixties were the last time the future was conjured in earnest. As we finally stand on the threshold of the future, it's being marketed as a form of crypto-nostalgia. The future? Been there, done that.

For their final collections of the twentieth century, nearly all of the most ferociously with-it designers at least dabbled in sci-fi a-go-go. Alexander McQueen created shiny circuit-board-patterned catsuits, and put them on runway models who had been groomed to look like extraterrestrials. Daryl K showed hooded black balaclava tops that turn women into utterly fab next-generation commandos. This last round of fashion shows was like "Austin Powers, Part 3," in which the hero winds up in the twenty-first century, but played straight, without jokes.

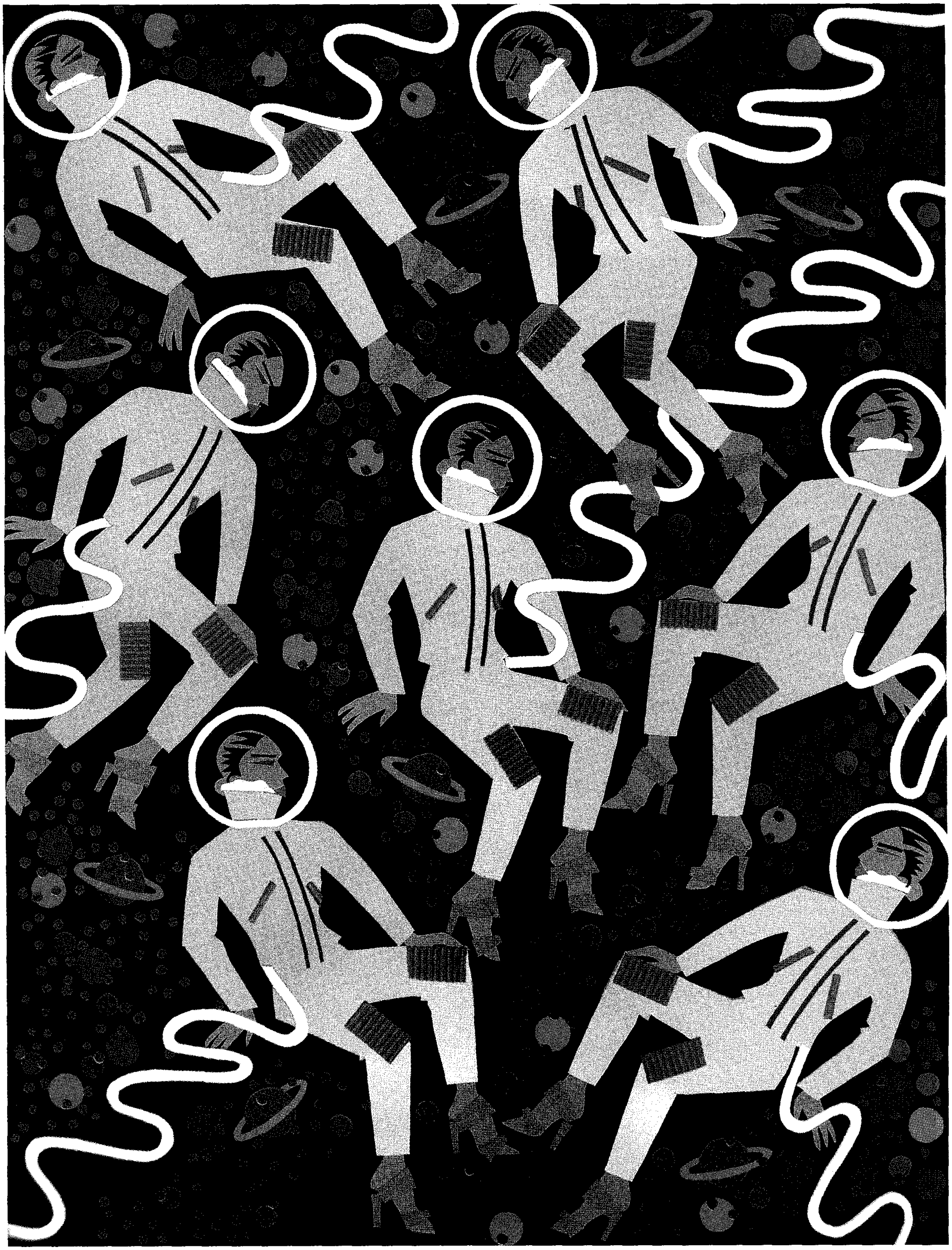
It's not just fashion designers who seem cowed by the challenge of creating evocations of the new century which are actually new. At Disneyland, executives considered various schemes for updating the section of the Magic Kingdom that simulates the future, but they finally gave up; henceforth, Tomorrowland will be presented as a strictly nostalgic view of the future. The futuristic heroes of "Men in Black" dressed and acted like circa-1962 cool guys, and worked in a cool-in-retrospect circa-1962 headquarters.

These "Groundhog Day" games of endless replay are by now a familiar syndrome, a kind of obsessive-compulsive disorder afflicting the whole culture. For the last quarter-century, pretty much every realm of art and entertainment has been trapped in its own self-referential loop. The cultural landscape has begun to seem like some vast M.C. Escher panorama, a slick, airless, and slightly maddening Möbius construction that, no matter how clever, almost never takes us to wholly fresh places, to destinations outside the maze, where things look and smell *new*. It's time. ♦

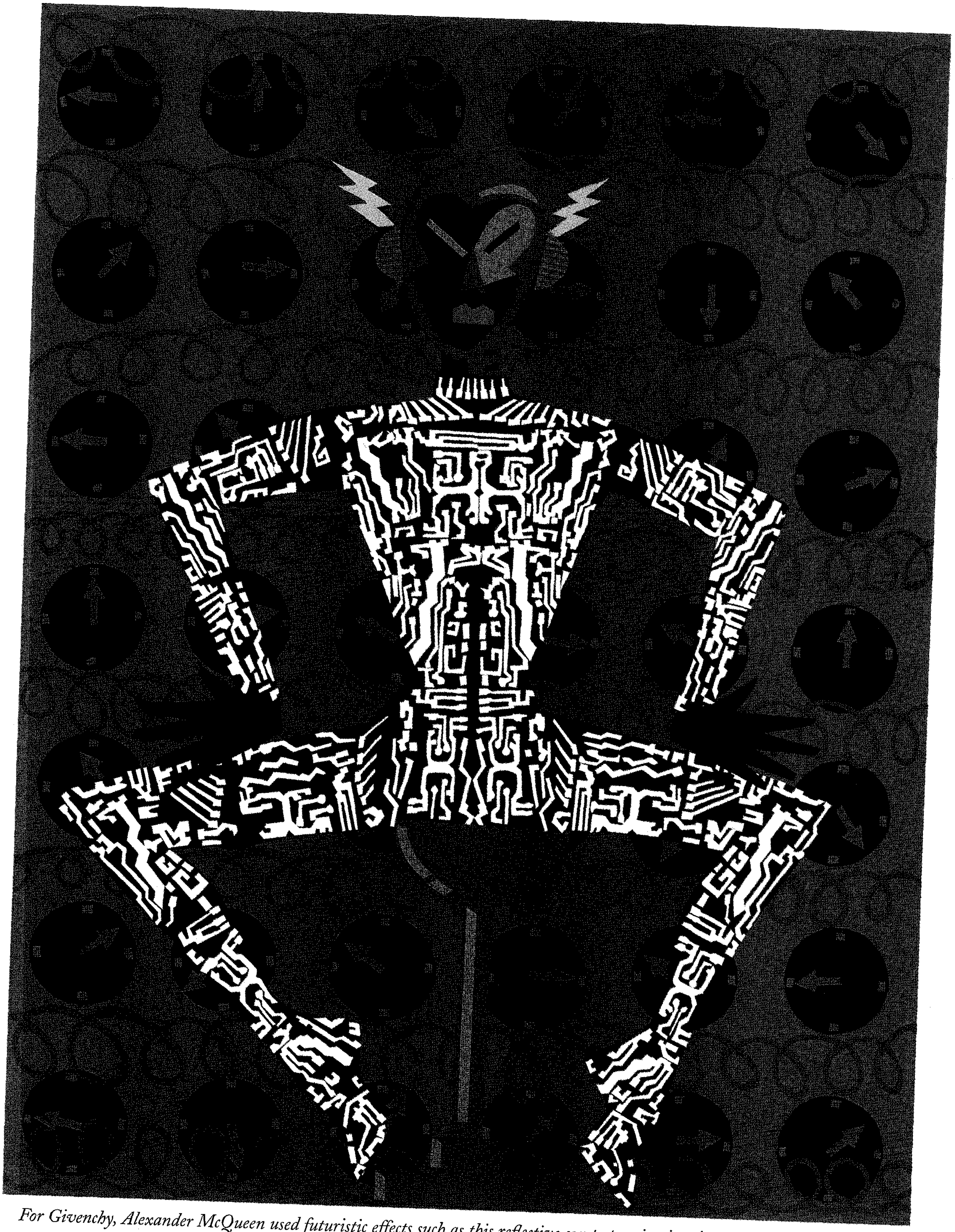


ILLUSTRATIONS BY MICHAEL ROBERTS

From left: fall collections include Barbarella-style silver skirts and chains (Chanel), Ninja looks (Daryl K), and fur space hoods (Fendi).



A squadron of space-age suits for fall by Helmut Lang come in high-tech mixtures of silver polyurethane and polyester.



For Givenchy, Alexander McQueen used futuristic effects such as this reflective computer-circuit print on a black stretch catsuit.

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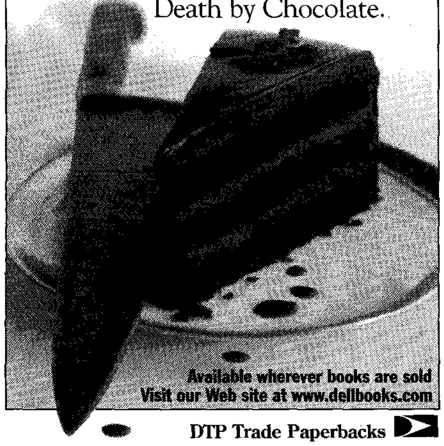

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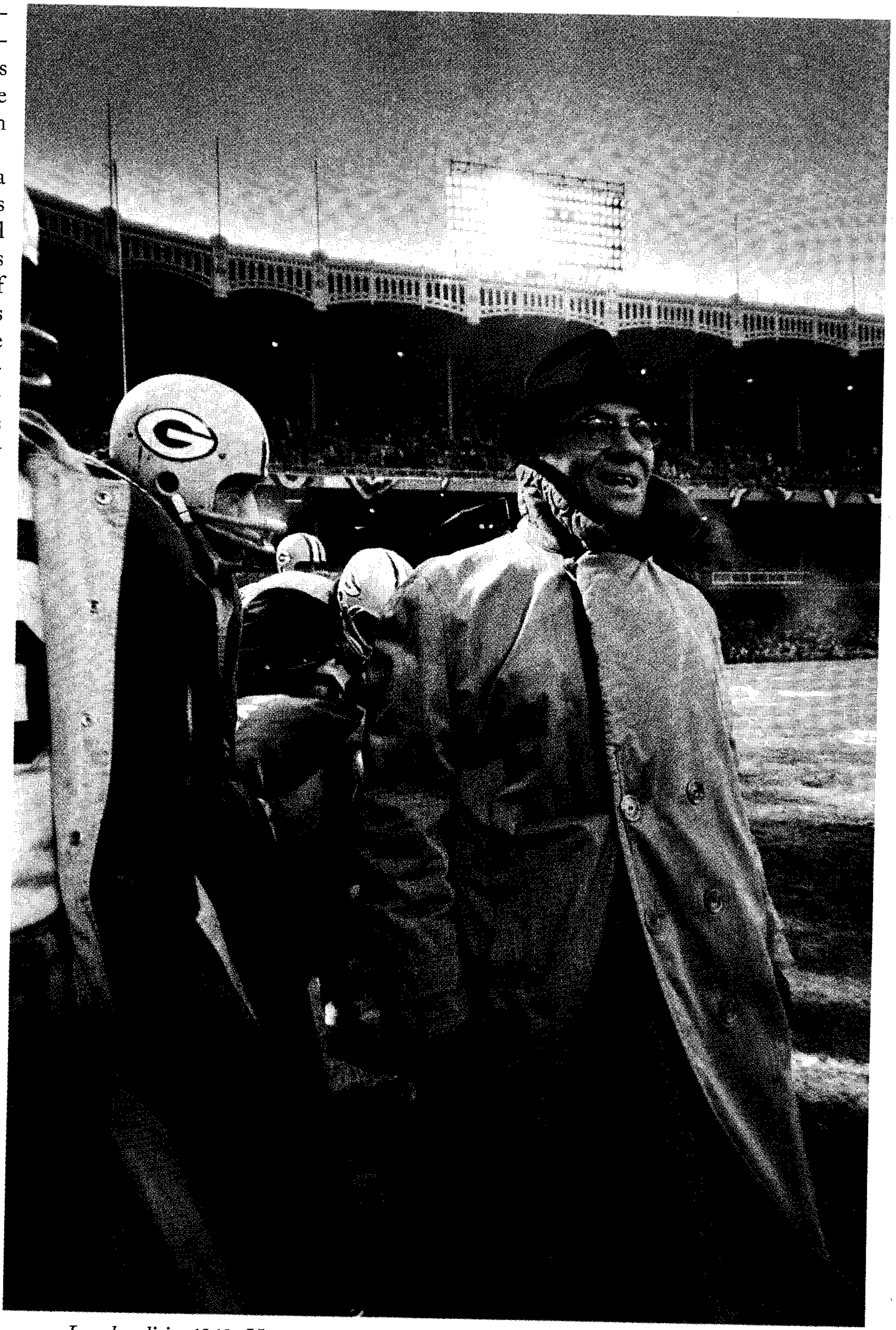
BY ADAM GOPNIK

PRO football is, of all our sports, the shortest on romance. It is not the summer game or the city game or the winter game or Saturday's America, or even an honest idiot's delight, like pro wrestling. All-out eleven-man tackle is not quite a game, really, since few people watch it firsthand and fewer play it. Yet if it is, essentially, a television program, it is a superior one. At a time when baseball has become a freak stat show, and hockey a leaden, demoralized trudge, and basketball a variant of Russian ballet, with single shining stars and subsidiary swans, football defends the integrity of its seasons, the "value" of its playoffs, even a certain teeming, righteously anonymous teaminess in its teams. It can still support small cities, giving championships to Green Bay and Denver, and nurturing back to life the Cleveland Browns.

But still no romance. The nearest thing that pro football has, or had, to a popular romantic epic is the tale of Vince Lombardi, the Italian-American from Brooklyn who in 1959 went to a snowbound little town in Wisconsin that had no business having a professional football team in the first place, and made the Green Bay Packers the permanent American pattern of teamwork, sacrifice, group effort, and discipline in a common cause. As every kid used to know, Lombardi's Packers dominated pro football throughout the sixties, playing a reassuring ground bass of solid Americana to the decade's madder music. Between 1960 and 1968, when Lombardi departed for an abortive career with the Washington Redskins—he died, of cancer, in 1970—the Packers won five N.F.L. championships, including three in a row, and the first two Super Bowls. For a generation coming to football, Lombardi summed up the type of the coach, in all his hard-soft glory. Famously tough, famously fair, with his short camel's-hair coat, his Ernest Borgnine voice, his gappy smile, even his funny, suburban dad's hat, Lombardi seemed like a sort of Italian Spencer Tracy in a Boys' Town for very big boys. The images of the Lombardi years in Green Bay, as they were captured and spread wide by N.F.L. Films, the fledgling propaganda office of the Pete Rozelle papacy—the snow, the muddy faces, the huge pulling offensive linemen whose movement, played back in slow motion, looked even more lumbering and purposeful and stately than it did on the ground; above all, the cold and the capes, the steam escaping from tooth-short mouths as the lights of the stadium flared in the lens and the Packers marched off with another victory—all this seemed reasonably near romance, as near as this cagey, brutal television product could hope to get.

Lombardi's life is now for the first time the subject of a serious, ambitious, non-sports fan's book, by the Washington *Post* journalist David Maraniss, called, a bit achingly, "When Pride Still Mattered" (Simon & Schuster; $26). Maraniss, who won a Pulitzer for his biography of Bill Clinton, plays in the cultural-watershed conference, and seems to believe that everything that happens on the playing field can be shown to be a neat reflection of the social history of America at the time, with the thought apparently never having occurred that this spectacle is, after all, taking place in the fun house, where the mirrors are *supposed* to distort things. Maraniss, trying to explain why the famous defensive line at Fordham in the nineteen-thirties, on which Lombardi played, was called the Seven Blocks of Granite, writes, "There could be no better time for a perfect and permanent object than in 1936: dust storms rage in the American heartland, the Germans storm into the Rhineland, depression and totalitarianism threaten life all around, but the Fordham wall still stands." So presumably in the slack sixties the same line would have been known as the Seven Spongy Guys.

Nonetheless, Maraniss is a good reporter, and he has gathered some news. Of all his discoveries, it is perhaps the depth and extent of Lombardi's New Yorkness that is most surprising. He has been so effectively kidnapped into Middle America that we forget he was as New York Catholic as Jimmy Breslin or Jackie Gleason. W. C. Heinz, the fine sportswriter whose "Run to Daylight!" is one of the ur-sources of the Lombardi myth, took a set of notes on his early life which are a compressed, haiku representation of a New York Catholic boyhood of the period: "Both parents perfectionist /2 story wooden frame/ house—gray/ Cathedral Prep—complete 4 yrs. / Atlantic Ave. /Brooklyn." "Perfectionist," as in most immigrant-family stories, is a euphemism for brutal. His father had the words "Work" and "Play" tattooed on either fist (sometimes American life needs no gloss) and could hit equally well with both. This seems to have left young Vince with an empty place, a hunger for someone who might tear you down but would then take the trouble to build you back up again.


Lombardi in 1962: He summed up the type of the coach, in all his hard-soft glory.

NEIL LEIFER

Lombardi became a minor star at Fordham in the late thirties, at a time when, disconcerting thought, New York was the college-football capital of the country—a time when Fordham, N.Y.U., and Columbia had nationally regarded teams, mostly with a local Catholic-and-immigrant flavor. It was not out West or down South but right Uptown that Lombardi found his vocation, as the least talented and most aggressive of the Seven Blocks. Bright, driven, and ferociously competitive, Lombardi was also, interestingly, scared to death of pain, and therefore obsessed with overcoming it.

He got a job at the tail end of the Depression, at St. Cecilia High, in Englewood, New Jersey, where both the team and the school itself were called the Saints. His star player, Mickey Corcoran, says that his method was to "rip your butt out, then pat you on the butt." (Corcoran later passed the method on, hot from the master, to the young Bill Parcells.) Lombardi took his next step forward when he went up the river to West Point, for an assistant's job with the already legendary Army coach

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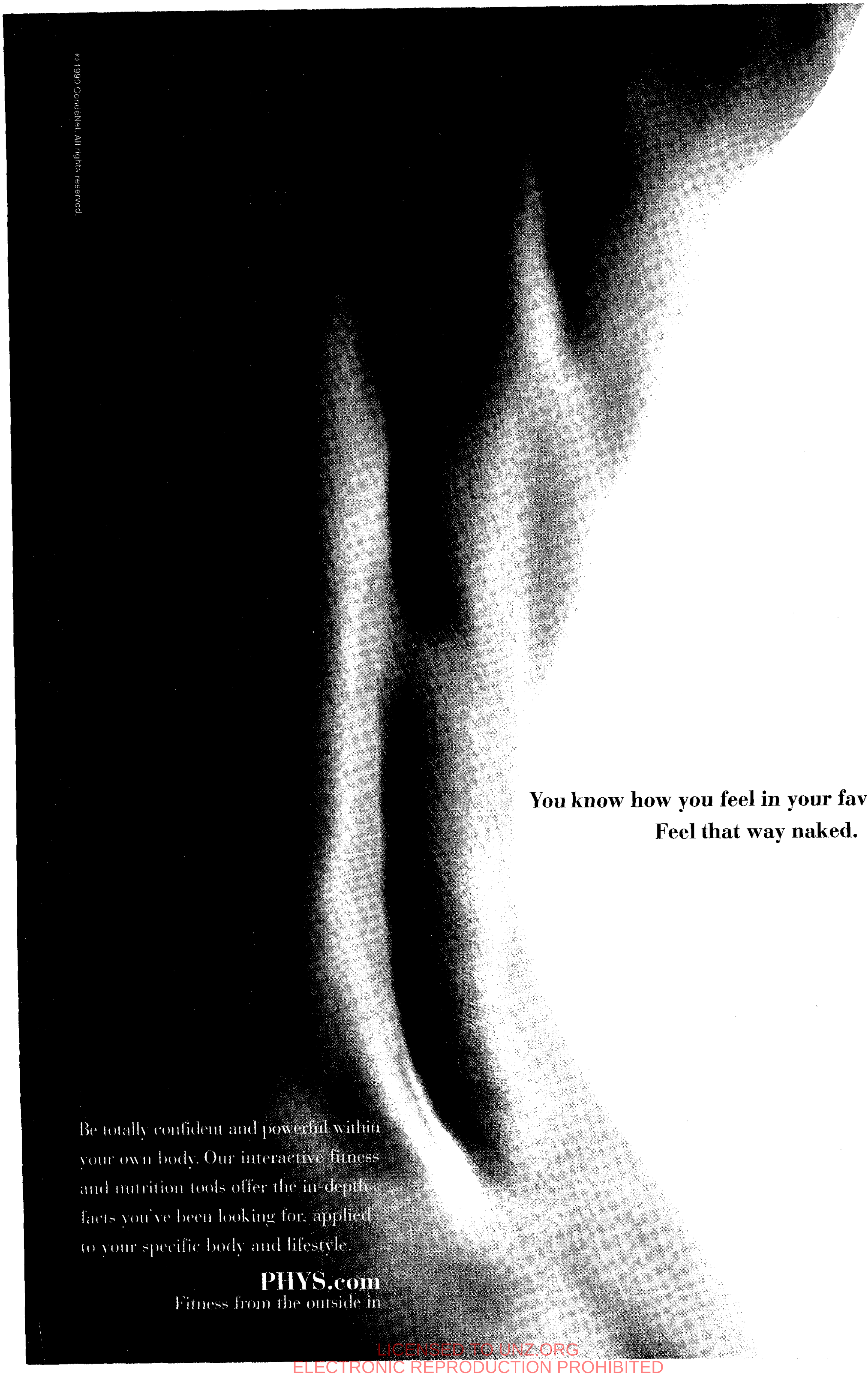

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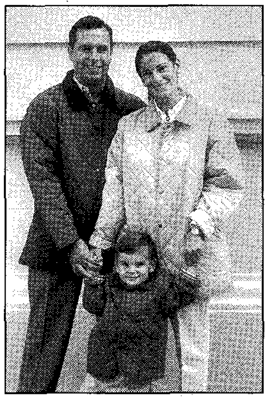
Earl (Red) Blaik, who hero-worshipped General MacArthur and was running probably the best program in the country.

Lombardi's ultimate ambition then was to get a job back in the city at one of the Catholic colleges. Even in the mid-fifties, pro football was still a bit of a raffish, seedy sport, like baseball at the turn of the century—run by bookies and gambling men, like the Rooneys in Pittsburgh and the Maras in New York. You soon realize what a leap of purpose was necessary for Lombardi to go to work for a pro-football team, which he did, in 1954, when he became the Giants' offensive coach. The newly hired defensive coach was Tom Landry, who later, as the coach of the Dallas Cowboys, would become Lombardi's greatest rival. Together, Lombardi and Landry brought a new, technocratic, General Motors style to the sport. It was typical of the period that the Maras would give neither one the head coaching job, instead letting them do all the work while a figurehead coach, Jim Lee Howell, a good old boy from Arkansas, stood around and looked the part. Far from being the inspirational, "emotional" leader of the legend, Lombardi was seen as a cool, educated technocrat. "THINK!" was the headline on a photo spread about him in one of the New York tabloids.

Maraniss, in narrating Lombardi's early years, insists that the key to his development was his exposure to Jesuit doctrine at Fordham—St. Ignatius of Loyola as interpreted by a theologian named Father Ignatius Wiley Cox. But thirty pages later we meet Coach Blaik, of West Point, who had pretty much the same approach to football—the same obsession with "the will exercised on disposition, thought, emotion, and action," i.e., regimenting the kids within an inch of their lives—and yet presumably wouldn't have known St. Ignatius from a hole in the ground. (In Blaik's case, the ethic is put down to dour Presbyterianism.)

Not that there isn't a Catholic element to Lombardi's career, but it seems to have worked at a more practical level. He profited, first, from the existence of a kind of informal Catholic network within football, which helped him get jobs and advanced his reputation, rather the way the Jewish network operated around the same time in show business. (Tim Cohane, a P.R. man at Fordham, acted as a kind of one-person spin machine, beatifying Lombardi when he became the sports editor of *Look* and helping out with Lombardi's speeches well into the late sixties.) If anything, Lombardi's Catholicism seems to have made him *less* obsessed with imposing "discipline," *less* imprisoned by his own principles, and readier to make the smart pragmatic compromise than the Blaik Wasp type ever could be. A central Catholic idea, after all, is that you can adapt to any circumstances, as long as you know what your core dogma

"This is Kevin. Kevin was uncool before uncool was cool."



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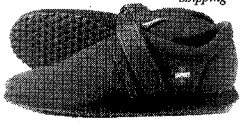

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BRIEFLY NOTED

HEADLONG, by Michael Frayn (Metropolitan; $26). Martin Clay, the alternately appealing and appalling hero of Frayn's latest comic novel, seems to have all he might reasonably wish for: a new career as an art historian, a loving wife, an adorable baby daughter, and a summer cottage in the English countryside, where he is supposed to be completing his book on fifteenth-century Netherlandish art. Instead, he stumbles upon an unsigned Brueghel (at least, he's almost positive it's a Brueghel) stashed in a fireplace of his neighbor's crumbling estate. Overwhelmed by high-minded professional curiosity and base greed, Martin resolves to acquire it by whatever means necessary. What follows is part detective story, part art-history lesson, part cautionary tale, and entirely funny—in fact, the propulsive nature of Frayn's comedy sometimes rushes us too quickly past the novel's abundant moral and aesthetic pleasures. Just as Martin is always maneuvering for a few moments in which to contemplate his newfound treasure in peace, we are grateful for any opportunity to savor the ingeniously designed world through which, Icarus-like, he is plunging.

CAPTURE THE FLAG, by Rebecca Chace (Simon & Schuster; $23). As this novel opens, in 1972, eleven-year-old Annie Edwards is daubing her face with camouflage for the annual game of Capture the Flag between her family and the Shanlick-Masons. As these two archetypal Manhattan families subsequently come undone in a flurry of divorces and dislocations, Annie is flushed out into the open terrain of adolescence, where she must forge new alliances. First novels about growing up in the seventies can be relied upon to chart a trail of fumbling sex, catholic drug appetites, and wakeup-call pregnancies leading, inevitably, to a loss of innocence; Chace, however, has committed a refreshing apostasy by suggesting that innocence can be extravagantly difficult to kill off.

FOREIGN BRIDES, by Elena Lappin (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $22). Taken as a whole, these sharp, wry stories about life in exile form a memorable portrait of cultural alienation and how it, too, can grow familiar. A bored Russian mail-order bride in London turns into a cabdriver intimate with the city's streets; a Muslim man flees Beirut to live with a friend's wife in England; a young German widow in Israel finds herself pregnant. Lappin's characters are brave and idiosyncratic and more than able to make do in times of hardship, reinforcing our feeling that in this book, at least, community is an expansive term.

THE JUKEBOX QUEEN OF MALTA, by Nicholas Rinaldi (Simon & Schuster; $25). Rocco Raven, an honest used-car mechanic from Brooklyn who has perhaps read too much Poe, has the bad luck to end up serving on Malta during the siege of 1942 and the good luck to be with the title character—the gorgeous, resourceful, blue-eyed Melita—while the bombs are falling. Part "Catch-22," and part "Swept Away," Rinaldi's story unfolds against a gallery of eccentrics, including a Miss Sicily who sings "Panis Angelicus" and a clubfoot with the crackpot idea of building a jukebox reliquary. There are also scenes of complex pathos: at the wedding of Aida, a hooker with a wooden leg, the guests—and the bride—break down and cry, realizing that somehow their lives are falling short of their dreams.

THE STORY OF GREENWICH, by Clive Aslet (Harvard; $35). Though contemporary Britons have chosen Greenwich—the home of the Royal Observatory, which gives the world its time—as the site of the Millennium Dome, their forebears have inhabited the place for more than a thousand years: the story of Greenwich runs from the Roman Empire to the Atomic Age. This beautifully illustrated book is jam-packed with history—a trove of facts which Aslet has unobtrusively organized so that the reader can enjoy its fascination and see its pertinence to the present.

CANDOR AND PERVERSION, by Roger Shattuck (Norton; $29.95). In these essays, a wry conservatism wrestles, and often bests, a breadth of literary and artistic experience. The result is nearly always worth following, for Shattuck is a lively thinker and a clear writer. He is also able to make use of the disparate materials lying about his crowded head (the Swiss Family Robinson, the artist John La Farge, Mallarmé, American education) without tendentiousness—with some of the same equanimity, in fact, that marks the pleasantly complacent economy of Guy Davenport's essays. This is a book for the reader who is happy foraging alongside a remarkable forager.

THE VANISHED KINGDOM, by James Charles Roy (Westview; $28). After 1945, Prussia ceased to exist, its territory having been allotted to Poland, Russia, and Lithuania. Roy's haunting book wanders through both the past and the present of this once powerful realm, starting in the thirteenth century, when crusading Teutonic knights drove east of the Vistula to conquer the heathen, and continuing into the present, in which a legacy of war, atrocity, and exploitation survives as ethnic hatred in a ruined landscape.

A BOOK OF REASONS, by John Vernon (Houghton Mifflin; $23). When Vernon's reclusive brother, Paul, died, in 1996, he left the author a house filled with dead cats, phone bills, Pepsi bottles, excrement, a ham radio. The cleanup effort required a dumpster and a backhoe, but Vernon's subsequent search for clues to his brother's fate is surprisingly delicate: his admittedly absurd attempt to restore order by nailing up a thermometer prompts a meditation that ranges from Alexandrian pneumatics to the evolution of norms. In the end, this sad, circuitous effort turns unexpectedly fraternal: Vernon's inclusive method validates the pleasures of the pack rat. Still, it's easy to understand the impulse behind the book's dedication: "Finally, for my sons, Charles and Patrick. The secret to life? Clean your room."

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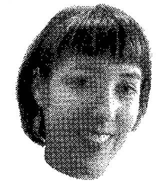

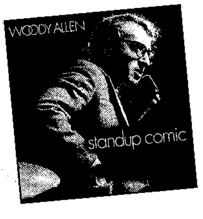

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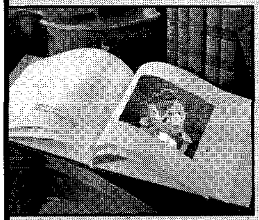

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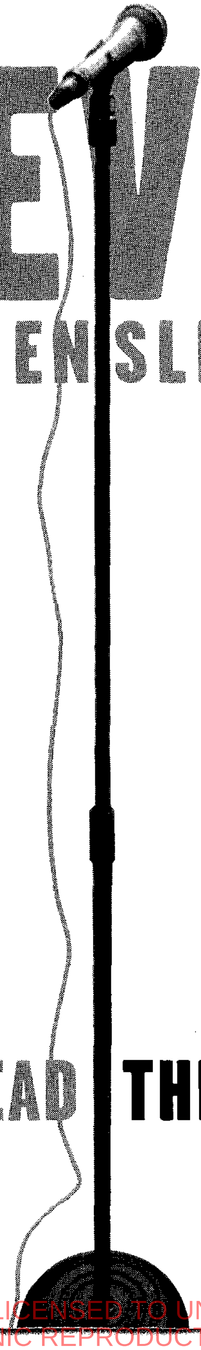

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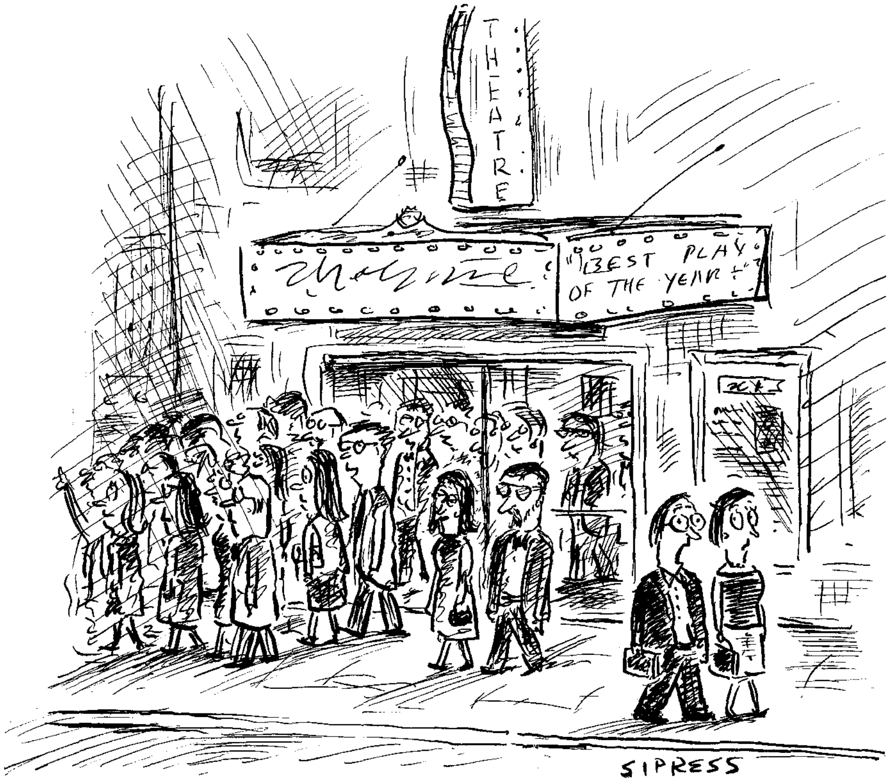
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is. Despite his reputation as a martinet, Lombardi was in fact a remarkably adaptable coach. He yelled at his players a lot, but when his Green Bay quarterback, Bart Starr, asked him to stop yelling Lombardi stopped yelling. He was tough on players who could take it, like his receiver Max McGee, and easy on players who couldn't, like the golden boy Paul Hornung. He even quietly tolerated and encouraged gay players, when they appeared. The real secret of his success was his ability to adapt without seeming to compromise. This is a good way to run a Church, or a football team.

LOMBARDI'S connection to another member of the informal Catholic football mafia was what, in 1959, got him the job at Green Bay. The real genius of the Pack, it turns out, and all credit to Maraniss for discovering it, was a brilliant, doomed young scout named Jack Vainisi. It was Vainisi who assembled nearly all the great players—Paul Hornung, Bart Starr, Jim Taylor, Ray Nitschke, Jerry Kramer—who would play for Lombardi at Green Bay.

We hover here on the edge of debunking—Lombardi didn't put together that team, Vainisi did, and anyone could have won with those players—but then Maraniss pulls back. "Which is more important, the talent of the troops or the skill of the leader?" he asks, and then he says that the question is unresolvable. O.K. But unresolvable isn't the same thing as inarguable, or beyond analysis. It is surprisingly hard to prove that any coach has ever actually accomplished anything. After all, two of the agreed-on genius coaches of our time, Bill Walsh, of the 49ers, and Earl Weaver, of the Orioles, both saw their teams win championships the year after they retired, with lowly unknowns doing just as well as the old wizards ever had. (Even the great Bill James, in his book on baseball managers, gets stumped trying to figure out who's good and who's just lucky, and ends up writing a lot about Sparky Anderson.) Still, Lombardi's record is so extraordinary that it's hard not to see it as the fruit of a system.

Writing about Lombardi's first years with the Packers, Maraniss conveys the impression that what he really brought to Green Bay was not pride—which is,

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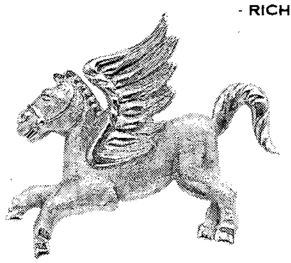

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in the Catholic scheme, a sin—but fear, an important Catholic virtue. ("When Fear Still Mattered" might have been a better title for Lombardi's life, and more honest to the period, too.) Once he had assembled his players, he scared them half to death, threatening them with professional extinction at every moment, and made them work past the constraints that held back most other players.

Football hurts, all the time. The natural reaction of the pro coach was to respect the limits of desire and push the players, who were, after all, professionals, as hard as they could be pushed, and no harder. Lombardi's insight was that you could push players much, much harder than coaches normally did in pro ball—and they wouldn't rebel. (They might burn out eventually, but that wasn't your problem.) He grasped that deep inside even Bart Starr and Ray Nitschke were high-school kids, eager to satisfy. What's more, he grasped that, because they were so gifted, they hadn't ever been pushed as hard as they could be.

Lombardi made the fear, and the pain, tolerable by simplifying the work. He wasn't just trying to "build character" or urging players to "have a winning attitude"; he asked them to master specific tasks with clear rewards. On offense he asked them to master a single play. "We're going to take a giant step backward, gentlemen," he said in training camp, and then he built the entire Green Bay offense around the famous 49 power sweep, an intricate elephant's dance that had the interior linemen running, against their instinct, and the halfbacks waiting, against theirs. He forced his players to practice the sweep over and over, ten or eleven hours at a stretch, until its complicated mechanics were second nature to them, and it became an almost mystical experience. "The sweep," Ron Kramer, a Packer tight end, said later, "is really all of life. We all have to do things together to make this thing we call America great. If we don't, we're fucked."

Lombardi also grasped the paradoxical, complementary truth that tiny gestures are more effective in motivating men than big rewards. So along with the repetition came an emphasis on symbols: on dress codes, work codes, a right way and a wrong way to do everything. He even encouraged his players to tip the locker-room attendants, so they would get better-quality talc. The players thought he was a cheapskate at contract time, but they still recall the lift that the words "You're starting Sunday," which he took care to say in public, could produce.

More than anything else, Lombardi grasped that you could push your players only if they believed they could trust you not to betray their interests—that if you threatened them with professional extinction you also rewarded them with professional advancement. And not just advancement in the game. You had to give them the sense that the discipline you insisted on would serve them outside football, mostly by landing them securely in the middle classes. High-school kids, he sensed, played for college scholarships; college kids for a shot at the pros; and pros for a permanent hold on a decent existence. Lombardi's Packers did go on, to an impressive degree, to do the kinds of things football players did then if they could—insurance, broadcasting, running car dealerships. He was able to scare his players so effectively because on some decent level he shared their fears, understood that even the toughest among them quaked at the idea of being used and then used up.

Lombardi, during this time, got handcuffed to the slogan "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing." And so he was thought of as the "military" coach, the general-in-waiting. But the truth is that, for all the rhetoric, football is nothing like war, where the crucial thing is not to fight better on equal terms but to get thirty-three players to your opponent's eleven; though generals worry about morale, they don't worry much about motivation, the alternative to fighting being dying. Rocky Bleier, the Pittsburgh Steelers back who fought in Vietnam, once remarked to Roy Blount that in certain ways it was easier to fight in a battle than to play football, since in a battle you were there to take orders and didn't really have any choice, while in football there was, in effect, always a little voice inside you wondering why you didn't just give it up for that sporting-goods store in Palookaville. A football coach, unlike a general, has to motivate his troops over and over again; a general just has to make sure he can get some more troops.

The price that coaches like Lombardi seem to pay is to have not so much an unhappy inner life as a remarkably flat one. The dance of distance and intimacy that they have to practice is so constantly demanding that there is nothing left. The glimpses that we get of Lombardi at home are not of a coach trying to "regiment" his family but of a guy who has mostly just left it at the office: Lombardi riding back and forth with his son, whom he loved, to the practice field in silence; Lombardi absent-mindedly teasing and then ignoring his daughter; Lombardi not wanting to pick up a late-night phone call for fear that something might have happened to his halfback; Lombardi, most painfully of all, letting his wife, who was about as happy in Green Bay as any other bright New Jersey girl would be, drift into hard drinking without doing much to stop it. The most memorable glimpse of Lombardi at home is of him sitting on a sofa turning the pages of cookbooks, staring for hours at the recipes of dishes no one in his house would ever make.

ALTHOUGH Lombardi liked to pretend that he had been exiled to anonymity, in fact his legend benefitted enormously (and predictably) from his being way out there in Wisconsin. Like the literary critics racing up from London to Hull to admire Philip Larkin—imagine a man with enough integrity not to go to book parties—Lombardi's old New York sportswriter friends loved to make the trip to Green Bay to ogle at what their pal had done in the sticks. W. C. Heinz, then Dick Schaap, and finally Howard Cosell himself all came up to Green Bay to worship. (Cosell was immensely flattered when Lombardi called him "coach"; nobody had the heart to tell him that Lombardi called everybody "coach.")

From the mid-sixties on, in fact, Lombardi was so "legendary" that he was looking to get out of Green Bay into a position where he could actually own part of a team. He started giving "motivational" speeches—the Seven Building Blocks of Victory, that sort of thing—to luncheons of anxious businessmen. By the late sixties, though he remained a model of "How you win at life" to his admirers, he had become a model of "Why we are losing in Vietnam" to his detractors. This Kennedy Catholic-technocrat-liberal was embraced by Richard Nixon, who even considered him for the Vice-Presidency.

It was, on reflection, the Nixon years that made pro football lose the little romance that the Lombardi years had been creating for it. Nixon hugged the game so tight that the color drained right out of it. (He did the same thing to the space program, and it took all of Tom Wolfe's Crayolas to put the color back in.) This is sad, because Nixon's love of the game seems to have been one of the few completely sincere things about him. He sent plays in to the Redskins coach George Allen, and they weren't stupid. But he made pro football look, well, Nixonian. It's no surprise that the two best football books—George Plimpton's "Mad Ducks and Bears" and Roy Blount's "About Three

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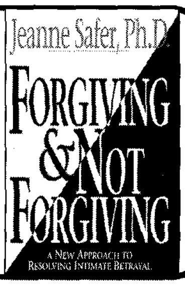

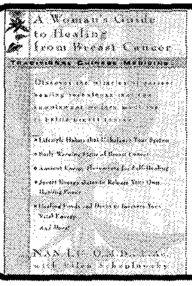

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Bricks Shy of a Load"—date from the early seventies, and are essentially anti-Lombardi tracts. Both books (Plimpton's about the maverick Alex Karras, Blount's about the 1973 Pittsburgh Steelers) insist, against the grain, that what really makes football teams go are Scotch and dirty jokes and Rabelaisian esprit de corps, with the seven building blocks and the team discipline and the rest of it strictly for the birds, or fans.

On his deathbed, Lombardi was still making plays, discussing with the Redskins quarterback Sonny Jurgensen how to beat a three-four defense. From a narrowly football point of view, his achievement as a coach now looks secondary, like a big parenthesis in the development of the game. The same play executed over and over again was only going to work in a league that was, in some respects, locked in stasis, as the N.F.L. was on the field in the early sixties. Maraniss repeats a famous story about Lombardi teaching his sweep to an audience of wide-eyed coaches for eight hours, but he misses the central football point of the story, which is that chief among the men listening was Sid Gillman, about to become the coach of the San Diego Chargers. Gillman, who will never be the subject of a biography, is by far the most influential coach of the last forty years. He had the insight that there was nothing to stop you from using the passing game in the same way that Lombardi used his running game, which would give you all the benefits of possession football, only at ten to twenty yards a crack. It was this faith that Gillman passed on to his own disciple, Bill Walsh, who, touching Gillman's scheme with Rube Goldberg complexity, won three Super Bowls in the eighties, and, in turn, passed it on to his disciples, who now dominate the game (including the last three Super Bowls). In our own day, among successful coaches only Bill Parcells, who received Lombardi's doctrine in pure form from Corcoran, can really be called a Lombardian.

Yet the gap between Walsh and Lombardi isn't decisive. Above all, Lombardi was a detail freak. Walsh's own book, "Finding the Winning Edge," for all its razzle-dazzle "play schematics," spends most of its pages laying out clear lines of responsibility for everyone from the interior lineman

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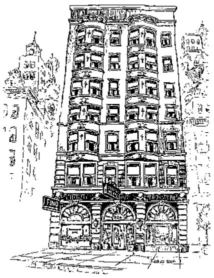

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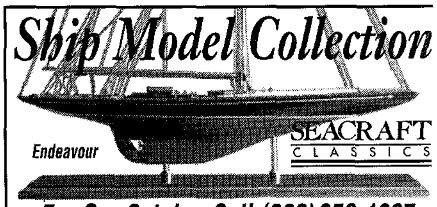

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to the stadium beverage manager. Just as baseball is really blue-collar rather than bucolic, so pro football is really managerial rather than military. It gives form to the mid-level manager's belief that you can work every problem, that organizational science will get you anywhere you want to go. Perhaps this is the real spell that pro football casts, and explains why it is a stranger to romance. There is a poetry of the field and of the factory, of the farmer and of the proletariat, but the middle-manager is always left unsung.

As we recede from the great age of the Organization Man and move into the age of Unorganized Man, we may at last see the manager with nostalgia. The story of Apollo 13, unthinkable as an epic in its own period, now brings tears to our eyes in all its sincere, nerdy organizational passion: *Let's work the problem, gentlemen.* Even the fundamental flaw in the managerial vision, the inability to see past its own systems to a world not so easily susceptible to manipulation, has in it a kind of optimism. The spirit that enables Walsh, in his list of Inspirational Events, to include both the Jewish fighters in the Warsaw Ghetto and Ken Venturi's victory in the 1964 U.S. Open is part of the spirit that makes one believe that all problems, no matter how intractable, can be managed, solved—that the accidents of birth and talent can be levelled by an intelligent system.

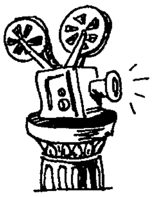
Pro football, as violent as boxing, as patterned as figure skating, illuminates the hard path from sensation to meaning as well as any sport can. The coach's job, to use brutal collisions as the means to meaningful patterns, is the fan's job, too, in reverse. We break down the patterns into the acts of individual gumption that it takes to make them happen. Yet for an American pro-football fanatic who lives abroad what's really striking is how much this passage back and forth from the spectacle to the sport seems to be breaking down. On Fox's football broadcasts, or in the new-style sports magazines, football is presented as all sensation: big hits, big plays, showy taunting, everything geared to the single shocking moment. Even the voice of the announcer on the pregame shows is a World Wrestling Federation voice, stirring it up, where the old N.F.L. pregame show began with the players on the field doing their drills—images of hard work, the "search for excellence," etc. If the Lombardi regime had its pieties, at least they were the pieties of common effort. We go to our sports for thrills, of course, but we go for more than that, too. If we start to ask for nothing but thrills from our games—the ball heading over the fence, who cares what inning, the hit breaking the man, who cares what down—then we have lost something, just as the tight end promised. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

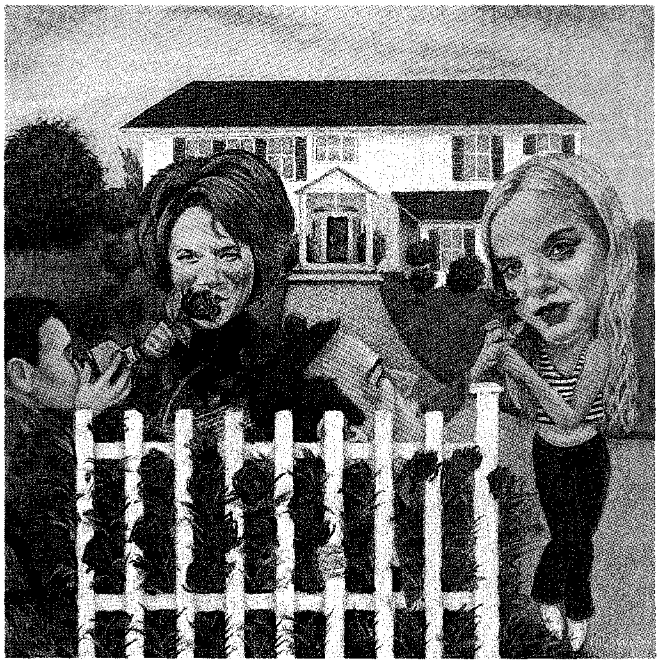
TRANSCENDING THE SUBURBS

"American Beauty" goes from satire to a vision of the sublime.

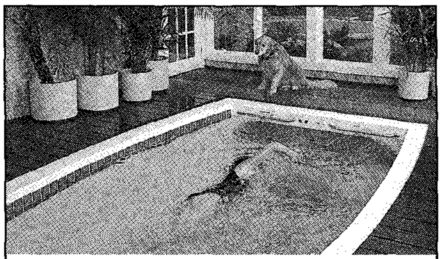
BY DAVID DENBY



KEVIN SPACEY, of the malevolent stare and insincere good will, may be too ornery a hipster ever to become a popular movie star, but he's certainly a great actor, and never more viciously and tenderly so than in "American Beauty," which is by far the strongest American film of the year. After a short prologue, Spacey narrates in his insinuatingly mild voice. "This . . . is my neighborhood," he says as the camera glides over a demi-paradise of suburban trees and houses. "This . . . is my life." He introduces himself: Lester Burnham, forty-two years old, householder, father, husband, and flop. Lester's teen-age daughter, Jane (Thora Birch), whom he neglects, has withdrawn from him; his hyper-organized wife, Carolyn (Annette Bening), whom we see busily cutting roses in the front yard, won't sleep with him; at work, his job as a media-magazine reporter is rapidly being defined out of existence. Lester has become a superfluous man, drifting through life in a nasty funk. He masturbates in the shower, or even while lying in bed next to Carolyn—that's his idea of rebellion, and he won't apologize for it. In the past, Kevin Spacey's manner has been so calculated and fishy that he's made a teasing ironist like Bill Murray look as straight as Al Gore. But in "American Beauty" Spacey, for the first time in movies, tastes the ash of authentic misery. Lester's marriage gets blown apart by squalls of comic contempt, and the movie opens up from his unhappiness and takes in the larger community—the dissatisfactions of the business-mad, image-mad nineties. In the end, "American Beauty" offers Lester and his milieu a kind of redemption: the movie's bitter satirical riffs on suburban conformity and social



A boy with a camera sees the hidden connections among things.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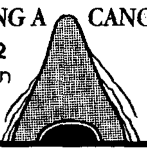
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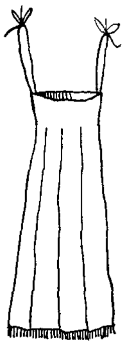
surfaces give way to an appreciation of the vagrant beauty hidden behind the surfaces. It's a rich, brilliant, and unnerving work—a funny movie that hurts—and perhaps no actor but Spacey could hold its contradictory moods together.

The screenplay, an original, was written by Alan Ball, who has worked in Off Broadway and on television ("Cybill"). Ball signed on as a producer of "American Beauty," to protect his script, which happily fell into the hands of Sam Mendes, the British theatre director who mounted "The Blue Room" and "Cabaret" here in the last two seasons. The matchup works well. Ball writes prickly satirical dialogue—the kind of egotistical rant that exposes the person delivering it—and Mendes is a master of embarrassment and discord. He stages a recurring theatrical tableau of domestic misery—mom, dad, and daughter tearing one another apart at the dinner table—and the crack timing he brings to the little cruelties makes us laugh again and again. "American Beauty" might have been a success even if it were merely a brutal razzing of suburban banality. But the filmmakers were interested in much more, and when Mendes wound up working with the great American cinematographer Conrad L. Hall a miracle was wrought.



Hall, who is seventy-three, shot "Cool Hand Luke," "In Cold Blood," "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid," "Fat City," and many other famous movies. A dazzling technician, he's never been this witty or moving before, and from the opening shots we are stunned by the troubled beauty of the movie's visual scheme. The compositions are gleaming and hard-edged; the figures, standing before glass doors or in front yards, are posed in cleanly organized suburban spaces. But everything is a little too bright, too clear, and the scenes pass into a mesmerizing hyperreality. As Lester airs his unhappiness, the camera perches high above his bed, or creeps along toward a shower where he is working himself over, and the off-kilter handsomeness of the imagery absolves the moment of squalor—we're freed to enjoy Lester's bitterness as a funny aria of despair. A bit later, at a basketball game, Lester becomes fixated not on his daughter, who is one of the cheerleaders, but on her friend Angela (Mena Suvari), a blonde with pouty lips. We see what's in Lester's mind—Angela all alone on the gym floor, vamping just for him. As she unzips her sweater and is about to expose her breasts, rose petals come pouring out. It is the flower of Lester's virility, which his wife has clipped, and throughout the movie, in a touch worthy of David Lynch or even of Buñuel, Lester will dream of Angela naked and covered with ruby-red petals. Again and again, the dreamy moments are extended deep into fantasy, and then abruptly ended, returning us to reality with a chill. The editing, by Tariq Anwar and Chris Greenbury, is superb. The movie is complexly organized but never rushed; everything has weight, even sequences lasting a single shot, and the editing discovers what goes deeper than satire—the hidden connections among things.

Angela really does come on to Lester, and he foolishly inquires of two gay men in the neighborhood how to get himself in shape ("I want to look good naked"). In a series of savagely written scenes, he misbehaves all over the place, insulting his wife and telling off his boss, while devoting himself with monastic discipline to creating a body that a teen-ager will desire. In separate ways, husband and wife are representative nineties Americans, whipping themselves into frenzies of narcissistic will. Carolyn, a real-estate agent, arrives at a house that she wants to show, and, as she furiously scrubs and polishes the place, Annette Bening, in a peppy little mantra, says to herself, over and over, "I-will-sell-this-house-today, I-will-sell-this-house-today!" On and on she goes: Mendes makes the sequence as rhythmic and stylized as a musical-comedy number, and Bening, pulling her neck cords tight, produces one classic moment of comic hysteria after another. Her Carolyn receives the roughest treatment of any of the characters. She's a joyless perfectionist and a phony—her politeness could freeze Martha Stewart in her tracks—but she's trying so hard, and so unsuccessfully, to be a success that one can't bring oneself to dislike her. The nineties bite, and they leave marks.

"American Beauty" offers an official nineties slogan: when Carolyn has an affair with the local real-estate king, Buddy Kane (Peter Gallagher), a smarmy super-salesman, he tells her, "In order to be successful, one must project an image of success at all times." If the satire has a single target, that prime bit of business wisdom is it. Angela, the teen queen, also believes in projecting success all the time, and she terrorizes Lester's daughter, Jane, with her erotic expertise, insisting that she's pleased that grown men like Lester want to sleep with her, "because it means I have a chance of being a model." In her Valley Girl way—she speaks the bullying, media-wise teen idiom—Angela holds herself to corporate standards of presentability. All these characters know about self-actualization; they believe in the gospel of selfishness, and they love the jargon of personal triumph, but underneath they feel bereft, as if their true selves had gone unrecognized.

It turns out that help is on the way—a young man with a camera, who sees what others can't. New neighbors move in next to the Burnhams, including a teen-age boy, Ricky (Wes Bentley), who stands at his window and takes pictures of unhappy Jane Burnham with his video camera. At first, the spying Ricky seems like a creep. Solemn, and hooded in manner, with an unsettling direct stare, he's a drug dealer who keeps his life hidden from his Marine-colonel father (Chris Cooper). Ricky's silence is a dodge; he truckles to his authoritarian dad, even takes a beating from him now and then, in order to preserve his secrets. But Ricky is the one who has the courage to go beyond appearances. Using his camera, he discovers the beauty in Jane that she never knew was there. A drug-dealing voyeur as liberator! Ricky is the movie's biggest risk: We are meant to accept him as an artist figure in disguise, the redeemer of the suburbs. He meets Lester and turns him on; the dealer and the dropout do little more than exchange signals, but they make a kind of informal alliance against that "image of success at all times." The film has a counter-image to propose. It's on Ricky's favorite tape, and it's just a prolonged shot of a small white plastic bag, turning in the wind that arrives before a storm. We hear Ricky speak of "an entire life behind things," and of the unbearable beauty in the world.

This is a highly calculated, ironic epiphany—the sublime in a whirling piece of trash—and you may gasp at the oddity of it. But you may also realize, with relief, that there's nothing of sixties cant in Ricky's vision. What he says is free of psychedelic nonsense or political ideology. Instead, he offers a new, rapt way of seeing—the artist's way, the moviemaker's way—and Lester Burnham, the defeated suburban patriarch, picks it up and attains as much happiness as he is capable of. The movies shall lead us out of despair by making us *see.* The story takes a violent and perverse turn at the end—Lester's newly beautiful body disastrously attracts the wrong person—but Lester's narration continues to control the tone, and "American Beauty" ends in peace, even in an affirmation, as Lester blesses the world that has destroyed him. "I'm great," Spacey says, offering the first guileless smile of his career. The filmmakers have been working toward this beatific mood all along, developing it in dreams, in Ricky's video explorations, in the increasingly abstract use of rain, light, and color. "American Beauty" is an impassioned fantasia of misery and release. I can think of no other American movie that sets up tensions with smarty-pants social satire and resolves them with a burst of metaphysics. When the different parts of "American Beauty" come together at last, the movie makes something merely clever like "The Truman Show" or "Happiness" look like child's play. ♦

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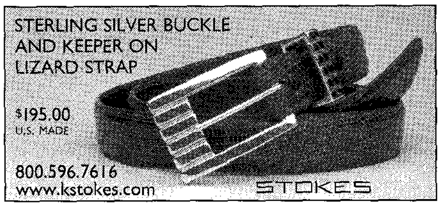

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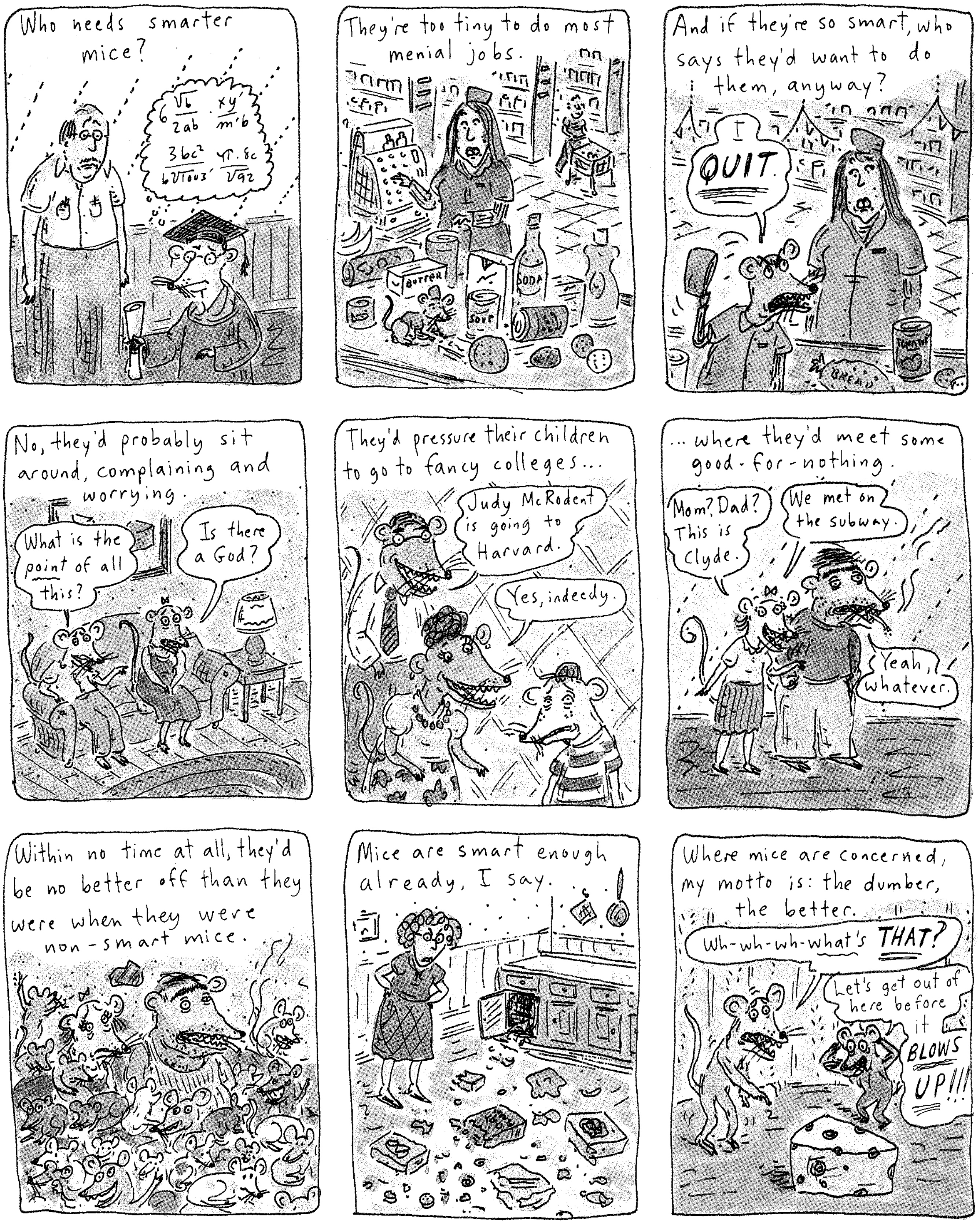
THE BACK PAGE BY ROZ CHAST

OF MEN AND MICE


Who needs smarter mice?
They're too tiny to do most menial jobs.
BUTTER
SODA
SOUP
And if they're so smart, who says they'd want to do them, anyway?
I QUIT.
TOMATO
BREAD
No, they'd probably sit around, complaining and worrying.
What is the point of all this?
Is there a God?
They'd pressure their children to go to fancy colleges...
Judy McRodent is going to Harvard.
Yes, indeedy.
...where they'd meet some good-for-nothing.
Mom? Dad? This is Clyde.
We met on the subway.
Yeah, whatever.
Within no time at all, they'd be no better off than they were when they were non-smart mice.
Mice are smart enough already, I say.
Where mice are concerned, my motto is: the dumber, the better.
Wh-wh-wh-what's THAT?
Let's get out of here before it BLOWS UP!!!

R. Chast

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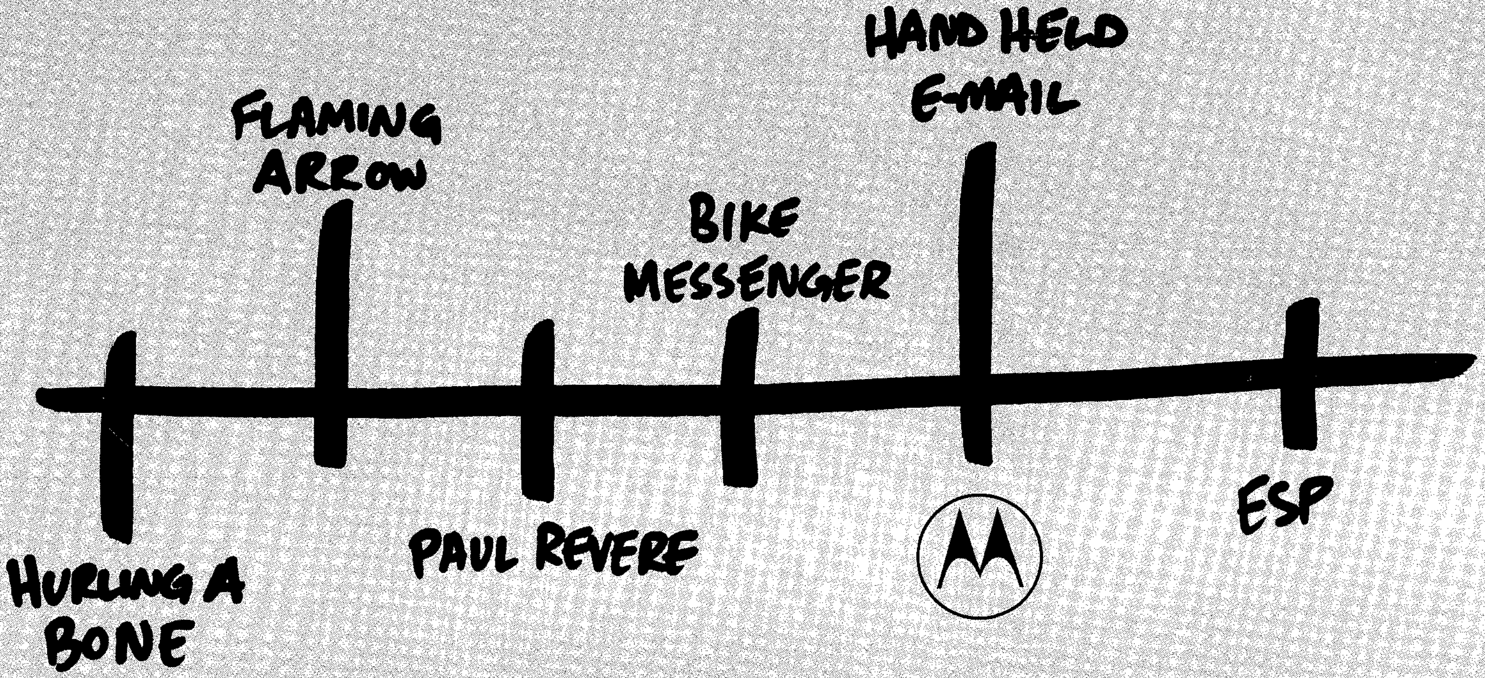
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